

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



# Fire This Time!

## Fire This Time in Venezuela!



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*By Thomas Davies*

On August 4th, 2014 a huge tailing pond full of toxic mining waste burst open in Northern British Columbia (BC). The Mount Polley Mine disaster spilled an estimated 25 billion litres of slurry filled with lead, arsenic, nickel and copper into Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek and Quesnel Lake, a source of drinking water and important spawning grounds for sockeye salmon.

An investigation into the cause of the spill revealed major engineering errors. Even so, no charges or fines have been laid, and the BC provincial government let a 3 year deadline to file criminal charges come and go last August. Meanwhile, Imperial Mines reported an increase in revenue to \$453 million in 2017, which included a 30 million increase specifically from the Mount Polley Mine it continues to operate.

Mount Polley is just one example. A new study from the United Nations Environment Programme found that Canada has had seven known mine tailings spills in the last decade, only one less than China, which tops the list. Higher than even the U.S.

When we take a look at the way big business has been exploiting the environment – we see that the Mount Polley catastrophe is not exceptional.

It's a spike in a constant trend towards environmental degradation at the hands of corporations, and of governments which in the end make sure we are the ones who foot the bill and suffer the consequences.

Even just in British Columbia, you can look at the amount of obliterated forests, missing fish stocks, mining degradation, oil spills and pollution. You don't need to be a scientist to understand that something is not right.

### **Overall Trend**

Canada has missed every single greenhouse gas target set at a national level since the 1990s and our greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. A new audit by Environment Commissioner Julie Gelfand found that, "Canada is not expected to meet its 2020 target for reducing emissions" and "meeting Canada's 2030 target will require substantial effort and actions beyond those currently planned or in place."

These are even just the lacklustre emissions targets put in place by the Harper Conservatives and kept by the Trudeau Liberals. Did you also know that a big part of Trudeau's climate plan assumes Canada can subtract a huge chunk of its emissions and pay to add them to the U.S. ledger through carbon credits? Something the U.S. hasn't even

agreed to do!

### **Same but Different in the B.C.**

As if Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, hadn't disappointed enough people, the B.C. NDP Premier John Horgan seems to be doing his best to outdo him. Horgan approved the massive Site C Dam against the urging of indigenous nations whose territories it would flood, as well as environment and energy experts who pointed out it would ruin prime agricultural land which could feed a million people for electrical power which is not required. Even if the electricity was required, there are also many renewable options at a similar or lower price point.

Horgan also recently announced a plan to develop a \$40 billion LNG facility in Kitimat. Like Trudeau, he promised to do that while meeting climate targets and obligations to indigenous peoples... without any plan or details regarding how this would be possible. The NDP's new framework offers LNG companies tax breaks and a cheaper electricity rate than even the previous B.C. Liberal government.

LNG is currently BC's single largest carbon polluter. The Pembina Institute has pointed out that if both phases of the LNG Canada Kitimat are built it would emit 8.6 megatons of carbon per year in 2030, rising to 9.6 megatons in 2050.

BC Green Party leader Andrew Weaver has been decidedly toothless when it comes to the NDP's decisions to approve the Site C Dam and expand LNG in BC. However, he was able to point out that the cheap electricity rate the NDP is offering the LNG industry is a "ratepayer subsidy" of the Site C Dam power that would go to LNG corporations "at less than half of what it would cost to produce."

To add insult to insult to injury, when the B.C. government announced its promised review of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") which is used to extract LNG, they decided that the review wouldn't examine human health impacts. This was at the same time as the most authoritative study of fracking's impacts to human health ever published found "no evidence that fracking can be practised in a manner that does not threaten human health." So why ignore it?

### Industry is Not Planning on Slowing Down

Since 2010, the B.C. government has authorized the drilling of 4,772 new LNG wells. There are approximately 25,000 wells in B.C., 12,771 of which are reported as active.

A Sierra Club BC study showed that Vancouver Island's old-growth forests are declining by 30%, three times faster than primary forest loss in tropical rainforests. Only about 10 per cent of the biggest trees remain standing. On Eastern Vancouver Island it's down to one percent.

Justin Trudeau and Alberta Premier like to point to their success in establishing a "hard cap" on Tar Sands emissions, but Alberta's official energy plan is to increase Tar Sands emissions from 70 to 100 megatons per year by 2030.

They are also trying to move ahead with the largest-ever open pit tar sands mine in the world. The \$20-billion Teck Frontier Mine would create a gaping hole in the boreal forest in Northern Alberta and pollute sensitive watersheds that flow into Canada's largest World Heritage Park. Teck Resources has also signed contracts to ship oil through Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline.

Meanwhile, the mining industry celebrated a 20% increase in mining exploration B.C in 2017.

### They Lie, We Foot the Bill

These corporations are constantly trying

to expand and a rush to profit from a shrinking amount of natural resources, but they do so with little regard for the consequences.

Mining Watch Canada, published a study showing that BC has the largest unsecured environmental liability in Canada for mine site clean-up costs – over 1.5 billion dollars. "At the current rate to which BC collects revenues from mining royalties, it would take 40 years to cover this liability," said Ugo Lapointe, Canadian program coordinator for Mining Watch Canada.

In Alberta 1.3 trillion litres of fluid tailings has accumulated in Tar Sands open tailing ponds. There is nothing else like it in the world. The U.S. Department of the Interior even classifies the Mildred Lake Settling Basin as the world's largest dam by volume of construction material.

An article in DeSmog Canada found, "less than 8 per cent of these costs is held as security by the province, leaving Albertan taxpayers exposed to a significant financial risk for tens of billions of dollars if major companies are no longer around when it's finally time to reclaim these sites."

A peer-reviewed study by the David Suzuki Foundation and St. Francis Xavier University found methane emissions from BC's oil and gas industry are two-and-a-half times higher than reported.

Wonder how they get away with all this? Under the current regulatory system in BC, oversight of both the logging and mining industries is done primarily by professionals hired by the same corporations they are supposedly overseeing – rather than independent government staff. They call this "professional reliance". We call it "highway robbery".

When it comes to oil and gas, you can just follow the money trail. Dogwood Initiative found that Texas-based Kinder Morgan and associated firms of its Trans



Westar Open Pit Coal Mine. Sparwood, BC



Mildred Lake Tar Sands tailings pond is classified as the largest dam by volume of construction material on earth

Mountain Expansion Project donated \$771,168 to the BC Liberals prior to their approval of the controversial pipeline.

### Their World or Our World

So, the status quo does not good – or even livable. These corporations and politicians act like pirates frantically trying to stuff gold into their pockets while their ship is sinking. Imagine what BC and the world would look like if we left it up to them? The good news is that there's still time to turn this around, and people have shown some exciting potential when they organize together. Both the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the Site C Dam are way behind schedule due to persistent opposition which shows no sign of going away. It's important to fight and to win these individual battles against destructive projects, and then move forward together to confront the capitalist system which prioritizes profit at the expense of people and the planet.

System Change Not Climate Change!  
No Kinder Morgan Pipeline!  
Stop Site C Dam!

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Today March 26, 2018 marks three years since the start of this criminal war against Yemen. The country is not only under daily aggression from the Saudi-led coalition but is also under an illegal air, sea and land blockade imposed on Yemen by Saudi Arabia.

In one of the first videos we watched, Saudi Major General Ahmed al-Asiri, former spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, spoke about the war on Yemen with such arrogance and such cruelty in his voice, that I thought it is important that I point out the video and start with it because he basically speaks in the name of the government of Saudi Arabia, in the name of the United States imperialism. In the video he claims that Saudi Arabia has only gone to Yemen and started bombing Yemen to bring back stability to the country.

This in itself is contradictory, you don't bomb a country for 3 years to bring stability! General al-Asiri goes on to say that the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen is fighting against "countries that have an ideology that takes them out of their borders". What he described here is what Saudi Arabia is doing, it is out of its borders attacking a neighbouring country and he is giving these absurd pretexts and excuses for why they are doing so in Yemen.

He continues to say that "we need to implement international law, respect sovereignty of countries and that we can't come from the outside and intervene in the internal affairs of a country". General

al-Asiri is basically describing what Saudi Arabia is doing in Yemen. It is intervening in the internal affairs of the country, it is intervening in the internal disputes between people of Yemen, that are up to the Yemeni people to decide on. It is up to the Yemeni people to decide who their president is, who their prime

puppet, and that then they could control whatever happens in Yemen. But it wasn't the case!

The people of Yemen have been resisting them. Their so called "Operation Decisive Storm" was such a failure that, within a month of indiscriminate bombing campaign, the Saudi government claimed success and announced the end of "Operation Decisive Storm" and the start of another operation named "Operation Renewal of Hope". This is the same operation that has been going on until today. After three years of bombing, after three years of killing they're still calling this "Renewal of Hope".

What hope have you seen in all those videos from Yemen? According to the Yemeni Legal Centre for Rights and Development more than 14,000 people have been killed and over 22,000 injured after three years of war and blockade. The situation they are creating in Yemen is the opposite of what hope is. And they are still using those terms, trying to fool the international community.



minister is, what kind of system they want to have.

Another one of their excuses is "bringing back legitimacy" to Yemen. They claim Saudi Arabia is intervening in Yemen to reinstate Yemen's former president Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi. Hadi is unpopular in Yemen, his presidential term had expired, he resigned, fled the country, went to Riyadh, which is the capital of Saudi Arabia, where he still is now hiding and claiming legitimacy from the palaces of his Saudi monarchy masters! Any claims of "legitimacy" are a complete farce.

Another fact, that I think shows the hypocrisy and deceptions of the Saudi government, is at the start of this military campaign in March 2015, the Saudi-led coalition called the operation "Operation Decisive Storm". They thought they were going to go into Yemen very quickly, "Decisive Storm", reinstate back their

## U.S. Accomplish Since Day One

I want to refer to another video that we watched that I think is very important to talk about, well actually two videos. The first one of them is a CNN video from 2015, that came out right when the Saudi-led bombing started, and it shows how since day one the United States was right there supporting logistically, militarily and politically, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia would not be able to carry out this military campaign without the support of the U.S. government.

Since day one, the U.S. military has been responsible for intelligence gathering and support to determine targets to bomb, they are providing mid-air refueling to coalition fighter jets bombing Yemen. So, all the horrific pictures and videos that you see of schools that are being targeted, of hospitals that are being bombed, all the intelligence for those strikes is gathered

by the United States military and given to Saudi Arabia.

Another video that I want to refer to is the video of Trump with the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman from his recent visit to the White House. That video showed the ridiculousness and hypocrisy of the U.S. government with Trump pulling out those big printed placards, showing pictures and prices of fighter jets, bombs and other military armament that Saudi Arabia is purchasing from the United States. With arrogance in his voice, Trump was bragging about this weapons sale and the hundreds of millions of dollars he was bringing back to the United States. To give a precise number, the weapons deal that Trump signed with Saudi Arabia is worth US\$350 billion. It is considered the largest arms deal in American history!

Canada's Complicity in the War

The U.S. government is not the only one selling weapons to Saudi Arabia, here as people living in Canada, it is important that we hold this government also accountable. We have watched the CBC video reporting on the Canadian government's arms deal with Saudi Arabia. I wanted to highlight some facts that were in the video, but also others that weren't that I think are important to share to understand how Canada continues to be an ally of Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen.

From the CBC video we learned that this deal by the Canadian government, started under Harper and now continuing under the Liberal Trudeau government, is for a total of 928 modern light armoured vehicles, known as the LAV 6.



**Top: Canadian LAV III in Afghanistan in 2006, similar to the model being sold to Saudi Arabia.**



**Middle: U.S. President Trump shows posters of recent Saudi weapons purchases from the U.S. to visiting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. March 20, 2018**

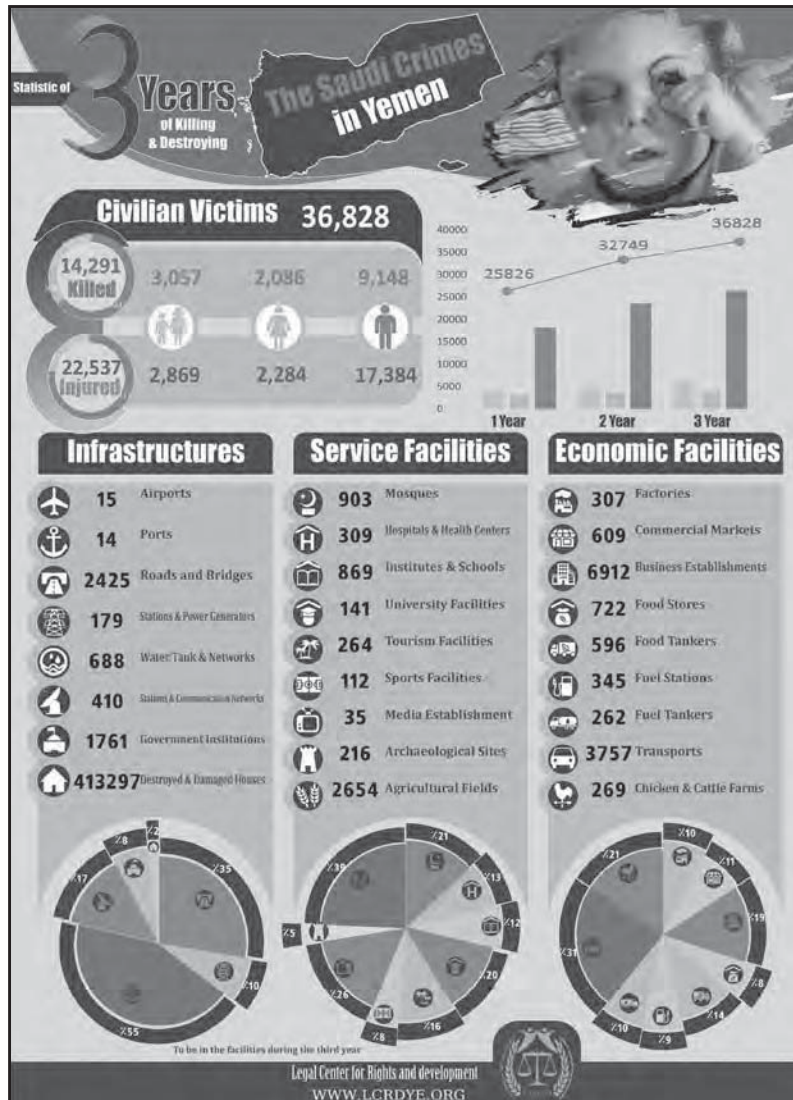
You saw the pictures of the vehicles, they are not merely "Jeeps" as Justin Trudeau once claimed, they are military armed vehicles and Canada is selling 928 of them for \$15 billion to Saudi Arabia.

The newly obtained records by CBC News and referred to in the video show that the arms deal goes much deeper than just selling the armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, it also involves a 14-year support, training and maintenance program. In the video, CBC interviewed someone from the

Canadian Institute of Global Affairs who was kind of defending the arms deal by referring to this support and training clause as "a fairly significant amount of leverage" to pressure Saudi Arabia in the future if the Canadian government thinks there are human rights concerns. This is ridiculous and makes no sense! If the Canadian government ever cared about human rights concerns, it would not go ahead with the sale in the first place! This clause doesn't help the people of Yemen that are being bombed every day by Saudi Arabia.

The extent of the military relationship between Canada and Saudi Arabia goes beyond this \$15 billion arms deal. According to the National Post newspaper:

"Saudi Arabia was the largest non-U.S. importer of Canadian-made military goods in 2016, receiving \$142 million in





Photos show protests in Sana'a, Yemen marking three years of Saudi war on Yemen. March 26, 2018.

exports — nearly 20 per cent of all Canadian military exports.”

Another important fact to point out is that in 2017

Canada has exported \$11.4 million worth of rifles to Saudi Arabia, a 67% increase from 2016 according to iPOLITICS. So, this past year 2017, after two years of Saudi-led crimes in Yemen, the Canadian government more than doubled its sales of rifles to Saudi Arabia.

Actually in this point I will mention it again, and I think Alison mentioned it earlier, that on the back tables if you haven't signed it yet you will find a petition by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) calling on the Canadian government to end its \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, if you haven't signed it, please do so on your out tonight.

As we continue revealing Canada's complicity with Saudi Arabia, I want to read this excerpt from a CBC News article titled “Let's not kid ourselves, Canada is in the war business”:

“And so enthusiastic is the Liberal government about its wealthy Arabian partner [Saudi Arabia] that the Canadian military is allowing General Dynamics to use a military base to test the vehicles Canada is shipping, which come equipped with heavy guns and cannon. [...]

We do know that Canadian-made vehicles were used in the bloody repression of Bahrain's Shia population a few years ago. Whether they are deployed in Yemen is unclear, and it's a safe bet the Canadian government isn't terribly interested in finding out.

We also know that last summer, Canada quietly rewrote the rules governing the export of arms to other countries. No



longer do such exports hinge on whether the recipient nation is a human rights abuser. Instead, the Canadian rules now strive to ‘balance the economic and commercial interests of Canadian business’ with this country's ‘national interest.’”

These recent changes by the Canadian government on laws governing the export of arms further shows the hypocrisy of Canada, which goes to the United Nations and pledges millions of dollars to help the UN humanitarian efforts in Yemen while making billions of dollars selling weapons to Saudi Arabia!

I wanted to again point to another video that we watched earlier, which was the last one we watched, it is from brother Firas Al-Najim, an Iraqi human rights activist that has been organizing in Ottawa and Toronto against the Saudi-led war on Yemen. Alison mentioned it at the beginning, but I would like to remind you that earlier today in Ottawa they had a march and rally against the war on Yemen, they started the protest in front of Justin Trudeau's residence in Ottawa, then marched to the Saudi Embassy and Parliament Hill.

As we mentioned earlier, today was an international day of actions, we are here in Vancouver, we have heard from the action in Ottawa, and I want to share with you names of some of the other cities that had actions today. First, there

was the massive protest in Sana'a, Yemen, we can see some pictures from that rally around the room on some of the posters on the wall. Those are pictures of millions of people that took to the streets against the U.S. and Saudi Arabia's aggression on their country. Those people are millions of brave Yemenis defying Saudi fighter jets and taking to the streets to show their

resistance against the foreign intervention on their country. They are the inspiration of all the international people around the world that were out in their respective cities today, including here in Canada, in Vancouver and Ottawa. Other cities are London, Glasgow, Paris, Boston and New York. There have been different other actions against the war on Yemen throughout the U.S. this week, coinciding with the Saudi Crown Prince's visit to

different states.

I think it is important for us to think of our work and action in Vancouver here today in the framework of this International Day of Actions. We are part of a worldwide movement that is fighting against the war on Yemen, we are standing in solidarity with the Yemeni people who are fighting daily for their lives and defending their country against the Saudi-led military aggression.

So, it is important that here in Canada we continue our work especially now that we have all these facts and information about the involvement of the Canadian government, not just in selling the \$15 billion worth of armoured vehicles, but also in the sale of rifles and all the other military deals that the Canadian government is having and increasing with Saudi Arabia.

As I mentioned earlier if you haven't signed the petition yet please do, please get involved. This is important. We need everybody on board, us in Vancouver, our friends in Toronto and London, this is an international movement, we need to unite all our voices and join the Yemeni people in their resistance against the U.S./Saudi-led war on their beloved country.

Thank you.

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza\_R14

# ISRAELI ZIONIST REGIME MASSACRES PALESTINIANS!

## END THE OCCUPATION OF ALL OF PALESTINE!

## SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PALESTINE!

*By Thomas Davies*

Even by the normally chaotic and brutal standards of Israel's occupation of Palestine, March has been a busy month. There was the murder of dozens of killings and injuring of unarmed Palestinian protestors in one day as well as the attempted mass imprisonment and deportation of over 38,000 African asylum seekers, and finally the prosecution of 17-year-old Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi. Occupation is a cruel endeavour, and Israel is going all out.

### Bloody Friday

17 Palestinians were killed in one day by Israeli forces as thousands marched near Gaza's border with Israel. More than 1,400 others were wounded after Israeli forces fired live ammunition at protesters and used tear gas to push them back. The international outcry has been ongoing, but the United States blocked a draft UN Security Council statement calling for an investigation of the incidents.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman praised the army for having "carried out its work in the best possible way." He added that the military, "can respond much more harshly next time" and that it would not "hesitate to use everything we have." Despite this, Palestinians have remained committed

to carrying out their plan of action. The protest kicked off a six-week sit-in demonstration along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

### Mass Deportations

A crisis exposing Israel's state policy of hypocrisy to asylum seekers and migrants in also coming to a boil. The Israeli government announced in January that 38,000 mostly Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers had three months to leave the country. If they refuse to leave, they face indefinite imprisonment

In 2012, the Minister of Culture Miri Regev called asylum seekers and refugees "a cancer" and a threat to the Jewish demography of Israel. Israel has approved less than 1% of asylum applications since it signed the UN Refugee Convention six decades ago. Israel has now recognized only one Sudanese national and 11 Eritreans as refugees. In contrast, 94.1 percent of Eritrean asylum seekers are recognized as refugees in Europe

Israel claims that asylum seekers who agree to go to a "third country," which Israel refuses to name but are known to be Rwanda and Uganda, will be able to live and work there legally. Israeli magazine 972+ did an investigation and found not only that they are often denied legal status - they are often forced out within days of their arrival.

### Free Ahed Tamimi Now!

Recently a video of Ahed Tamimi confronting and slapping an Israeli soldier - who had just shot her cousin in the head with a rubber bullet and put him in a coma - went viral. She became a powerful and defiant symbol of the next generation of Palestinian resistance, and also became the target of right-wing Israeli commentators who took turns demanding harsher and harsher consequences for the 17-year-old.

Ahed was detained and faced years in prison. Her trial was mostly closed to the public and has received widespread condemnation from international and local human-rights groups. Following an ordeal that involved multiple arrests of her family members and constant interrogations where she was denied the presence of her lawyer or parents, Ahed agreed to a plea deal. She will serve eight months in prison, including her three months served in pretrial detention, and will have to pay a fine of nearly \$1,500.



#FreeAhedTamimi

When an Israeli military judge opened the courtroom for the press, the teenage Palestinian activist who had already spent months in jail wasted no time in making her opinion public before being cut off, "There is no justice under occupation. We are in an illegitimate court."

Unfortunately for Israel, the image of the young curly haired girl who has shown nothing but bold defiance has served as a massive point of inspiration for the movement demanding self-determination for Palestine.

### Not Over

Israel is a mess of contradictions. It claims to be an example of human-rights and democracy but is constantly engaged in violence and discrimination. What's most concerning for Israeli politicians and their U.S backers is that people like Ahed Tamimi and the thousands of Palestinians who show up to protests knowing they are a high likelihood of getting shot, prove that Palestinians have not given up the struggle for their self-determination.

As Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote in 'Poem for the Land',  
I am the witness of the massacre  
I am the victim of the map  
I am the son of clear speech  
I saw stones take flight  
I saw dewdrops become weapons  
When they slammed shut the door of my heart  
When they imposed a curfew inside me  
My heart grew into an alley  
My ribs became hovels  
But carnations were budding  
Carnations were in bud

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



Top: Palestinians rally to reaffirm their 'Right of Return' on March 30, 2018 Bottom: African migrants and refugees are protesting the Israeli government's plans to deport them February 2018



## Cuba Elects its Newest National Assembly

For many who are used to hearing that Cuba is a dangerous communist dictatorship, it may be surprising to know that on March 11, 2018 over 85% of Cubans participated in elections for their newest National Assembly. Yes, Cuba has elections and a parliament! Nevertheless, it looks very different from the electoral system we have in Canada, and also different than the one in the United States: Cuba has municipal, provincial, and national levels of government. Cubans nominate the candidates for the municipal government at local meetings. Members of the Municipal Assemblies can be nominated to the provincial or national level; other candidates are nominated by mass organizations. One does not have to be a member of the Communist Party of Cuba to be a candidate – indeed there are no parties in Cuba's elections, only individual candidates.

While at first the system may seem confusing, if you try to break down each step of the electoral system in Canada or the United States, you will quickly see that they too are complex and different as well. We will delve more into outlining Cuba's electoral process in this article, but first let's talk about the results of the March 2018 National Assembly vote.

For example, let's look at the high voter participation in Cuba. The Cuban National Electoral Commission (CEN) reports that the final turnout was 85.65% of eligible voters in Cuba. Canada, on the other hand, was very excited to announce that 66.1% of eligible voters turned out for the 2015 federal elections. This seems low for a country like Canada, where ruling class politicians often brag about our "democratic values", but the paltry 66.1% turnout was Canada's highest turnout in the last two decades!

Alina Balseiro Gutiérrez, the President of Cuba's National Electoral Commission, explained to Prensa Latina news agency that Cuba's new parliament will be: 53.22% women representatives, 13.22% of representatives are under 35 years old, and 40.17% of representatives are under 50 years old. Pretty surprising when the mainstream media in Canada and the United States continuously show

# CUBA ELECTIONS 2018: A Great Victory for Socialism



Raul Castro as the only politician in Cuba. Additionally, the fact that Cuba's National Assembly is 53.22% women means Cuba now ranks second in the world for the highest participation of women in parliament (Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world).

On the other hand, Canada's parliament is 27% women, ranking at 59<sup>th</sup> place in the world. The United States – the so-called leader of democracy (who said they would bring freedom to women in Afghanistan, etc.) – sits at 19.4% women in their national House of Representatives, putting them in 100<sup>th</sup> place in the world.

As I mentioned in my article last month in *Fire This Time*, on February 28, 2018 the New York Times published the article, "Goodbye Castros, Hello Communist Party." The article rails against Cuba's so-called authoritarian government, however it was widely criticized on Twitter for the photo it used of Cuba's parliament, which demonstrates its diversity in terms of age, gender, and race. A few tweeted side-by-side photos with American and Canadian elected officials to remind people of the deep contradiction of the New York Times critiquing Cuba's electoral system, while both the U.S. and Canada's so-called democratic institutions do not reflect the diversity of society.

## What is the Electoral Process for Cuba's National Assembly?

Below is a basic explanation of how Cubans elect representatives to their National Assembly of People's Power. Of course, this is a very basic outline, if you are interested in further details I recommend the book *Cuba and its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion* (Fernwood, 2014) by Montreal-based researcher and author, Arnold August.

The Cuban government has three main elected levels: municipal, provincial, and national. The full electoral process takes place every 5 years, and there is also a municipal process which takes place every 2.5 years.

1. Elections begin at the municipal level, with residents in each constituency (a small riding within a municipality) nominating between 2 and 8 candidates at public meetings held several weeks before the municipal election. All residents are welcome to this meeting to debate, discuss, and vote. Out of the 2-8

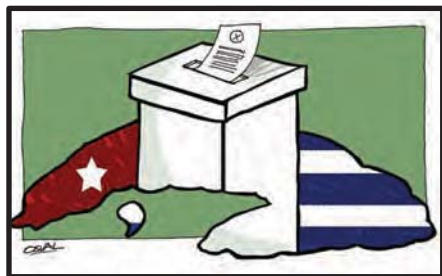


candidates each constituency will elect a delegate to their Municipal Assembly.

2. Once the Municipal Assembly representatives have been elected they choose their own President and Vice President, who will generally work full-time for the Municipal Assemblies, other elected members are expected to carry out their duties as voluntary work after their regular work hours.

3. The elected Municipal Assembly representatives can be nominated to both the Provincial and National Assemblies, there they are known as “de base” (of the base) representatives as they were elected directly from the constituency meetings at the community level.

4. For the Provincial and National Assemblies there are also members who



will be “directo” (direct) representatives, as they are proposed directly by the mass organizations. Six Cuban mass organizations: The Central Cuban Workers (CTC); the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR); the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC); the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP); the University Students’ Federation (FEU); and the Intermediate Level Students Federation (FEEM) are permitted to propose “directo” representatives through what is called the nomination commission.

5. The nomination commission collects the names of thousands of proposals for both “de base” and “directo” candidates. They work through redundancies and look at the make up of proposed candidates gender, age, race, education, and employment are all considered, they are also looking to have approximately 50% of candidates be “de base” and 50% “directo”. In 2018, the commission then proposed 605 candidates for the National Assembly’s 605 seats.

6. These candidates are sent to the Municipal Assemblies for approval. Each municipality will vote on their candidates,

for example in March – the municipality of Mariel in Artemisa province had two candidates, while the municipality of Santiago de Cuba (in the province of the same name) had 26 candidates.

7. These candidates are then sent to the population for ratification in a secret national ballot. Each candidate must receive 50%+1 of the votes cast. Cuban voters receive ballots with the names for the municipality in which they live. They can either vote for the entire slate proposed by the nomination commission (called the united vote), or “yes” for only the candidates they agree with. Of course,



**Cuban 5 Hero - Gerardo Hernandez casts his ballot along with family**

they also have the right to submit a blank ballot, a spoiled ballot, or the right not to show up on voting day at all.

Going back to the results of March 2018, of the votes cast 80.44% were for the slate or united vote, and 19.56% chose to select individual candidates. From the totals published in Granma Newspaper, most candidates received between 80-90% of the votes. Even prominent politicians such as First Vice President, Miguel Diaz-Canel and Cuban President, Raul Castro, must go through this process. Diaz-Canel ran in Santa Clara, receiving 92,85% of the vote, Castro ran in Segundo Frente winning 98.77% of the vote. Of the newly elected National Assembly members, 47.44% are “de base” representatives.

Who participates in the Cuban elections? Article 132 of the Cuban Constitution (ratified in 1992) states, “All Cubans over 16 years of age, men and women alike, have the right to vote except those who: a) are mentally disabled and have been

declared so by court; b) have committed a crime and because of this have lost the right to vote.”

Who can be nominated as a candidate? Article 133 of the Cuban constitution states, “All Cuban citizens, men and women alike, who have full political rights can be elected. If the election is for deputies to the National Assembly of People’s Power they must be more than 18 years old.”

Cuba’s elections are truly a community affair. The ballot boxes are guarded by young children who are members of the pioneers (like Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Canada & U.S.). Interestingly, ballots are counted publicly, at the end of the day’s polling. Anyone interested in watching the



vote count is free to do so, including national and foreign media, diplomats, tourists, etc. The reason for giving

the mass organizations so much power within the nomination commission is to work towards stronger participation from groups who were traditionally excluded or marginalized: workers, women, Afro-Cubans and young people.

### **Cuba’s Elections Face Media Criticism**

The New Yorker Magazine recently published an article titled, “As Castro Prepares to Leave Office, Trump’s Cuba Policy Is a Road to Nowhere”, written by journalist and author, Jon Lee Anderson. He writes, “Cuba still lacks some of the basic civil liberties that Americans take for granted, such as a free press and free elections. However, compared with many countries in the Western Hemisphere, most of which espouse some variant of democracy and a free-market economy, Cuba is a secure society with some enviable social indicators. Its murder rates are among the region’s lowest; its infant-mortality rates are lower than those in the United States; and its citizens are

*continued on page 14*

# SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

By Manuel Yepe

Cubans are going to the polls on Sunday, March 11th to elect members of the Provincial Assemblies of People's Power and deputies to the National Assembly of Cuba.

From this democratic exercise will emerge the new Cuban parliament and its superior body, the new Council of State, which in turn will elect the new president of the Republic of Cuba, the successor to General Raúl Castro Ruz who has been in charge of the government of the nation since 2008.

Raúl initially occupied the position by a statutory substitution, as President Fidel Castro Ruz became ill and it was incumbent upon him to replace him in accordance with his duties as First Vice-President. During the two consecutive presidential terms that followed, he was elected by the will of the citizens expressed at the ballot box, President of the State Councils and Ministers.

But this time Raul has announced his decision not to run for re-election. Raúl Castro has been, since the beginning of the armed struggle against Batista's tyranny, the second figure in the leadership of the revolution. His performance at the head of the government has earned him an increase in the prestige he already had for his performance at the head of the country's Defense Ministry.

No one questions his authority and the enormous popularity among the people that would enable him to continue in the presidential office in a new period. But Raul Castro himself has advocated the need to work for the renewal of the leaders of the revolution and the government, which, in the eyes of the people, has made it necessary to abide by his decision not to continue in office in the payment of a debt of gratitude to his President.

For more than six decades, Cuba has been engaged in a permanent war of resistance with the American superpower, in which an extraordinary trust of the island's population in its historical leaders has been forged.

Neither Raul nor any other figure of great revolutionary authority in the population has indicated his preference for any individual for the highest state office, abiding by principles that the historical leadership of the revolution has defended and practiced of preferring the



progressive renewal of leaders and cadres from the roots. The design of the Cuban electoral system was based on contributions from constitutional lawyers and other specialists committed to the independence and respect for the will of the Cuban people. It is not a copy of other systems, although it is based on the results of the analysis of texts prepared by the founding independentistas of the Cuban nation. It's also based on a study by Cuban experts of electoral systems of many countries in Latin America and other nations of the world. All this was systematically enriched by the practice of a population with an incomparably higher level of education and culture than before the revolutionary triumph of 1959.

In Cuba there exists, by constitutional requirement, a single party that, however, is not an electoral party nor does it participate at all in the electoral processes. Rather, it acts as the binding authority of all the people in

order to defend the independence of the nation and prevent its absorption by the neighboring imperialist superpower. This is a latent danger since Cuba ceased to be a Spanish colony after bloody liberating wars from 1868 to the ending of the 19th century, based on many heroes and great sacrifices.

Election advertising is prohibited on the island today. Neighbors of the communities elect their delegates from among themselves, who are members of the municipal assemblies, an exercise that is the essential basis of the system's total democracy.

In the municipal assemblies made up of delegates from the base, candidates are elected to be members of the provincial assemblies and deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power.

The latter elects the Council of State, composed of some twenty members who elect its President, the Head of State, who is also the head of the Government.

All elected representatives, from the base delegates to the President of the Republic, are required to report on their performance several times during the year to those who elected them.

The initial inspiration has been Greek democratic assemblies. However, unlike those, from which slaves were excluded, the voters are men and women; white, black and of mixed race; civil and military: the whole range of Cuban society. There are no limits other than those that restrict the rights of some whose legal sanction by the corresponding judicial authorities determines so.

The system is still perfectible. But its statutes require that any modification must always be aimed at bringing the country's political leadership closer to the people, bearing in mind the essential fact that the hegemonic power in Cuba is always and only in the hands of the Cuban people.

*Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

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*Translated and edited by Walter Lippmann.*



# LA DEMOCRACIA SOCIALISTA EN EJERCICIO

*Por Manuel Yepe*

Los cubanos acuden este domingo 11 de marzo a las urnas para elegir a los miembros de las Asambleas Provinciales del Poder Popular y a los diputados a la Asamblea Nacional de Cuba.

De este ejercicio democrático surgirá el nuevo parlamento cubano y su órgano superior, el nuevo Consejo de Estado, que a su vez, a elegirá al nuevo presidente de la República de Cuba, sucesor del General Raúl Castro Ruz quien ha estado al frente del gobierno de la nación desde 2008.

Inicialmente Raúl ocupó el cargo por sustitución reglamentaria al enfermar el Presidente Fidel Castro Ruz y corresponderle a él reemplazarlo en función de sus deberes de Primer Vicepresidente. Durante los dos periodos presidenciales consecutivos que siguieron, fue electo por voluntad de la ciudadanía expresada en las urnas, Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros.

Pero en esta ocasión Raúl ha anunciado su decisión de no presentarse a una nueva reelección.

Raúl Castro ha sido, desde el inicio de la lucha insurreccional contra la tiranía de Batista, la segunda figura en la dirigencia de la revolución. Su actuación al frente del gobierno le ha granjeado un incremento en el prestigio que ya tenía por su desempeño al frente de la defensa del país.

Nadie cuestiona su autoridad y la enorme popularidad en el seno del pueblo que lo capacitarían para continuar en el cargo presidencial en un nuevo periodo, pero el propio Raúl Castro ha propugnado la necesidad de trabajar por la renovación de los dirigentes de la revolución y el gobierno, lo que a los ojos del pueblo ha convertido el acatamiento de

su decisión de no continuar en el cargo en el pago de una deuda de gratitud a su Presidente.

Cuba vive desde hace más de seis décadas en permanente guerra de resistencia con la superpotencia norteamericana en la que se ha forjado una extraordinaria confianza de la población de la isla en sus dirigentes históricos.

Ni Raúl ni alguna otra figura de gran ascendente revolucionario en la población ha señalado su preferencia por algún individuo para el más alto cargo estatal, acatando principios que la dirigencia histórica de la revolución ha



defendido y practicado de preferir la renovación progresiva de dirigentes y cuadros desde las raíces.

El diseño del sistema electoral cubano partió de los aportes de juristas constitucionalistas y otros especialistas comprometidos con la independencia y el respeto a la voluntad de los cubanos. No es copia de otros sistemas, aunque está basado en los resultados del análisis de textos elaborados por los independentistas fundadores de la nación cubana y el estudio por expertos cubanos de sistemas electorales de muchos países de América Latina y otras naciones del mundo. Todo ello, sistemáticamente enriquecido por la práctica de una población con nivel educativo y cultural incomparablemente superior al que tenía antes del triunfo revolucionario de 1959.

En Cuba existe, por mandato constitucional un único partido que sin embargo no es un partido electoral ni participa para nada en los procesos comiciales sino que actúa como autoridad aglutinante de todo el pueblo en función de defender la independencia de la nación e impedir su absorción por la superpotencia imperialista vecina, un peligro latente desde que Cuba dejó de ser colonia española tras cruentas guerras libertadoras desde 1868 hasta el inicio de siglo XIX, a base de mucho heroísmo y grandes sacrificios.

En la Isla hoy está prohibida la propaganda electoral. Los vecinos de las comunidades eligen de entre ellos mismos a sus delegados que integran las asambleas municipales, ejercicio que constituye la base esencial de la democracia total del sistema.

En las asambleas municipales constituidas por delegados de la base se eligen los candidatos a ser miembros de las asambleas provinciales y diputados a la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular.

Esta última elige al Consejo de Estado, integrado por una veintena de miembros, y éstos a su presidente, el Jefe del Estado, quien es también presidente del Gobierno.

Todos los electos, desde los delegados de base hasta el Presidente de la República, están obligados a rendir cuenta de su ejecutoria varias veces en el año a quienes los eligieron.

La inspiración inicial ha sido la democracia asamblearia griega, pero a diferencia de ésta, en la que los esclavos estaban excluidos, los electores son hombres y mujeres; blancos, negros y mestizos; civiles y militares: toda la gama de la sociedad cubana, sin otras limitaciones

que aquellas que restringen los derechos de quienes cumplen alguna sanción jurídica que así lo determina, impuesta por las autoridades judiciales correspondientes.

El sistema es aún perfectible. Pero sus estatutos exigen que toda modificación deba siempre encaminarse al acercamiento de la dirección política del país a la población, teniendo en cuenta el hecho esencial de que el poder hegemónico en Cuba esté siempre y únicamente en manos del pueblo cubano.

*Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

[www.manuelyepe.wordpress.com](http://www.manuelyepe.wordpress.com)

# FCAB VANCOUVER CONTINUES MONTHLY PICKETS AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA!



## HEY TRUMP! LIFT THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!

*By Janine Solanki*

After 56 years of the U.S. blockade against Cuba, the U.S. government still has a tough time accepting the facts. Despite the severe economic hardships that the blockade has caused, the shortages of medicines and other import goods from school supplies to construction materials, the Cuban people have stood by and advanced the Cuban Revolution. Cuba is world renowned for its healthcare system, which has achieved a lower infant mortality rate than many first world countries including the U.S., and became the first country in the world to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, as validated by the World Health Organization.

However, the U.S. is continuing its unilateral and aggressive campaign against Cuba. Recently the U.S. government publicly reduced the staff at its Cuban embassy to a minimum level under the pretense of absurd allegations of "sonic attacks" against U.S. diplomats in Cuba. Interestingly, Cuba was also recently awarded the Excellence Prize as the safest country for tourism at the International Tourism Fair!

Here in Vancouver, Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade have been out on the streets on the 17<sup>th</sup> of every month, demanding that the U.S. end its criminal blockade against Cuba, stop its regime change programs, and return the territory of Guantanamo back to Cuba! On March 17, supporters of Cuba came together in front of the U.S. consulate, raising picket signs and voices high to demand "Hey Trump! Lift the Blockade!" The Vancouver picket takes place alongside coordinated actions in Ottawa, Montreal and as far as Kiev, Ukraine! Between rounds of picketing, protesters heard from local speakers as well as heard a voice message from activists in Ottawa Cuba Connections, who protested in freezing -27 degree weather! Friends of Cuba around the world have an important role in joining the Cuban people to stand up against continued U.S. attacks on their country. Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade in Vancouver will continue protesting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of every month, uniting voices for an end to the U.S. blockade on Cuba and for the full normalization of U.S./Cuba relations! To find out about the next action visit [www.vancubavsblokkade.org](http://www.vancubavsblokkade.org) or follow on Facebook and Twitter @NoBloqueoVan



## Guido Valera

Sept 3, 1931 - Mar 10, 2018

*It is with tremendous sadness that Fire This Time marks the passing of our compañero Guido Valera. Born in Chile, Guido came to Canada in the late 80s. He was a communist and defended many just causes on the side of working and oppressed people throughout his life. In Vancouver he was regularly at the monthly picket actions to free our 5 Cuban heroes from U.S. jails and meetings of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver. A beautiful memorial for his life was organized by family and friends at the Chilean Housing Coop in Vancouver on March 23, 2018.*

*¡Compañero Guido Presente!*





# Vancouver Celebrates the Revolutionary Women of Cuba & Venezuela on International Women's Day!

*By Janine Solanki*

March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, is recognized around the world as both a day to celebrate the advances women have made around the world, and a day of struggle towards equality and for women's rights. In Canada women still have many struggles to be overcome, including achieving equal pay, equal representation in government, and ending violence against women. While there are many hard-fought gains, women still have a long way to go.

Women in Canada and around the world can look to inspiring examples in Cuba and Venezuela, as women there are taking a leading role in the revolutionary processes in their countries and advancing women's equality in every sector of society. In Cuba since the triumph of the revolution in 1959, women have been organizing a "revolution within a revolution". The gains of women in Cuba range from free or affordable childcare ensuring that women have the ability to work, to women making up 48.9% of Cuba's parliament. With the upcoming elections, it is anticipated that Cuba's next parliament will be over 53% female. In Venezuela, after 20 years of the Bolivarian revolution, women are actively participating in and leading their society forward. Their efforts are backed by their constitution which was re-written after the election of former President Hugo Chavez to be gender inclusive and enshrine women's rights, and Venezuelan women also have a Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality.

In Vancouver on March 9, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) held a special event for International Women's Day in downtown Vancouver, celebrating the revolutionary women of Cuba and Venezuela. The event started out with an opening by Coast Salish elder and activist Kelly White, Vivian Sandy, an Indigenous elder of the Shuswap and Northern Diné nations, Martin Sparrow of the Musqueam nation and Shona Shuter of the Upper Nicola Okanagan nation. Through their words, drumming and song, participants recognized that the event was taking place on unceded and traditional Indigenous territories.

Participants then heard greetings from Tatiana Vizcaya, the Second Consul of the

Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver, who shared some of the work being done to advance women's equality and address issues facing women in Venezuela. Following Tatiana was Tania Lopez Larrouque, the Cuban Consul General in Toronto, who spoke via video conference to share words of solidarity and highlighted the importance of women in Cuba's revolutionary process.

Members of Proyecto Cultural Sur – Vancouver, a Latin American cultural organization, as well as Nicaraguan activist Mayra Climaco then shared beautiful poetry in both English and Spanish, reflecting the struggles and strength of women. The audience was then treated to a live music performance by Bouna Vedere Jabu and Brian Baroda. Bouna Vedere Jabu is a former member of the two-time Grammy winning Soweto Gospel Choir of South Africa, and with her music she had the whole room out of their seats and dancing!

Those attending then became much more active participants, as everyone split up into groups with team names like "Luchadores", "Lions", "Trouble" and "Late-comers" to take part in a trivia game! The teams answered questions about the heroic struggle of revolutionary women in Venezuela and Cuba, and engaged in a friendly competition to test their knowledge and learn more!

Participants then heard a first-hand report from Venezuela, from three VCSC organizers who had just returned from Venezuela earlier that day, where they attended an international solidarity conference. The three delegates were Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, Alison Bodine, coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, and Azza Rojbi, coordinator of Friends of Cuba against the U.S. Blockade. They shared their experiences from the conference and particularly a women-centered segment of the conference and International Women's Day in Venezuela, alongside a slideshow of photos from the events.

At the close of the event, the Indigenous



**L to R: Tamara Hansen, Alison Bodine, Vivian Sandy, Tatiana Vizcaya, Sra. Vizcaya, Kelly White, Martin Sparrow, Shona Shutter, and Azza Rojbi.**

elders gathered everyone together for a blanketing ceremony to honor the Venezuelan consul and the recently returned participants from the Venezuela solidarity conference.

From start to finish this event left participants inspired by the accomplishments of women in Cuba and Venezuela, and more determined to continue struggling to achieve justice and equality for women. To find out about upcoming events in solidarity with Cuba please visit [www.vancubasolidarity.com](http://www.vancubasolidarity.com) or on Facebook and Twitter @VanCuba\_VCSC

*Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki*



**Bryan and Jabu perform for an enthusiastic crowd**

guaranteed state-subsidized education and free health care. Yet, while the Trump Administration has tangled with some Latin American nations, Cuba is the only one under sweeping U.S. trade sanctions.”

While I disagree with Anderson about Cuba’s elections not being “free elections,” I believe his points about Cuba having achieved many important gains under the revolution are correct. He also points out the hypocrisy of U.S. President Trump continuing the unjust blockade against Cuba and increasing his anti-Cuba rhetoric, while ignoring obvious anti-democratic maneuverings by the ruling classes in Honduras, El Salvador, and Columbia.

Another slander often lobbed at Cuba is that people are “forced” by the military or police to vote. When you hear this lie, it is useful to remember that the National Electoral Commission (CEN) is the one that declared voter turnout was 85.65%, so logically they are saying not everyone participated. Secondly, right-wing groups who say Cubans are forced to vote, say that Cubans who are against the government should submit blank ballots. Nonetheless, in this recent election, 94.42% of the ballots cast were declared valid. CEN even publishes the data about that other (less than 6%) ballots. They noted that 4.32% of ballots cast nationally were blank and 1.26% were spoiled. These elections are not secretive, the results are counted publicly, published widely, and demonstrate that Cuba’s elections are popular and broadly supported.

### **Democracy: Capitalism vs. Socialism**

Under capitalism, we have a certain type of freedom and democracy which is for the wealthy – we call it bourgeois democracy. Why? Because freedom comes with having enough money to make your own decisions. If you are a single mother of two living on welfare, your so-called “freedom”, under capitalism looks significantly different than a single mother of two who is a millionaire.

Our “democracy” is the same. While

everyone has the right to vote, participating as a candidate required the ability to fundraise hundreds of thousands – or even millions – of dollars.

The historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Comandante Fidel Castro famously said, “They talk about the failure of socialism, but where is the success of capitalism in Africa, Asia and Latin America?”



One aspect I have yet to mention about Cuba’s electoral system is campaigning. Think about campaign time under bourgeois democracy – maybe you envision – politicians kissing babies, multicultural photo-ops, and attack ads on TV? Often what we do not think about is how much money you need to be effective in politics in Canada and the United States. In Canada’s 2015 elections, the losing Conservative Party spent \$42 million on their election campaign, while the winning Liberal party spent \$43 million. In the United States, Hillary Clinton’s unsuccessful campaign spent \$768 million, while Trump’s winning campaign spent \$398 million. However, it is estimated that \$6.5 billion (yes BILLION!) was spent in 2016 for the presidential and congressional elections combined in the United States. This terrain is not meant for poor and working people, it is a democracy for the wealthy to represent their own interests, not ours.

So how does it work in Cuba? In Cuba candidates are not allowed to spend money on political campaigns. Instead the local CEN commissions collect each candidates’ biography and photo and post them around the community on letter sized posters. There is no special

graphic designing or sloganeering. Voters are expected to read the biographies and make their choices. For the national assembly votes, there are usually joint meetings in workplaces and communities for candidates to meet with the voters they are hoping to represent. These meetings should involve all the candidates, and according to Cuban law, should not be about individual politicking/propaganda, but about hearing workers’ concerns.

As mentioned above, most elected members of government are not paid new salaries or extra for their work. They are expected to volunteer their time to their people and community after work hours. There are exceptions to this, depending on the workload each representative is mandated to carry out based on participation in commissions, as well as being deputies at the municipal, provincial, and national levels.

### **What’s Next for Cuba?**

Cuban President Raul Castro, who has been president since 2008, is stepping down from this post in April of this year. This is based on a change made in the law in 2011, which states that senior elected officials are now only able to serve for two consecutive terms. This will help maintain Cuba’s stability in this time of transition between the historic leadership of the Cuban revolution, represented by Fidel and Raúl Castro, to a new revolutionary leadership. The term limit is also because there is a sense amongst Cubans that the future leaders of the revolution will not have the privilege which was given to Fidel, a sort of blank cheque, based on their faith in the incorruptibility of his leadership.

Indeed, national unity has been a huge priority for many Cubans. Often the National Assembly of Cuba has voted unanimously on issues as a show of confidence in the historic leadership of Fidel and Raúl. However, as an untested younger leadership is brought forward chances are good more divisions on the future of Cuban socialism will emerge. Although debate and disagreements have always been a feature of Cuba’s ongoing revolutionary process, Cubans have



often protected these debates to avoid being misinterpreted by the imperialist bloodhound media, which is always looking to sow and deepen divisions.

On April 19, 2018 Cuba will hold the first meeting of the new National Assembly of People's Power. The 605 representatives will meet for the first time and vote for the new president of the country. It is widely expected that Cuba's First Vice President, 57-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, will be elected president by the National Assembly. Diaz-Canel was born after the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 and represents a new generation of Cubans taking up the leadership of the revolution.

The Associated Press published an article on Cuban election day quoting Cuba's Second Vice President, 87-year-old, Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, who told journalists, "We're almost in the future that we've been talking about, a transition, although we have been in transition since January 1 of 1959. Now the change is generational." The challenges ahead for the next generation of Cuban revolutionaries will be immense, as were the challenges faced by Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and so many other revolutionaries who fought alongside them. Diaz-Canel and the millions of Cubans who participated in the Mach 2018 vote are committing themselves to continuing to build a socialist path forward for Cuba. Despite challenges and difficulties, Cuba is continuing to defend its revolution and push towards new advancements.

*Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01*



**In Cuba, information about electoral candidates is publicly displayed without candidates spending money.**



*Free Mumia - Now More Than Ever!*

***Campaign to Free Mumia Takes on New Legal Challenges***

*By Janine Solanki*

Across the U.S. and around the world, supporters of U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal are preparing for a new legal and political challenge in the decades-long fight to free Mumia.

On December 9, 1981, Mumia Abu-Jamal was shot and beaten by police, and then arrested and imprisoned in Philadelphia on the accusation of killing of a police officer. In 1982, Mumia was unjustly charged for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer based on manufactured and false evidence, and given the death penalty. In reality, what the police needed was a scapegoat for a dead cop and who better to place the blame on than the young revolutionary journalist and former Black Panther Party member Mumia Abu-Jamal. As of today, Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent the last 36 years in U.S. prison, almost 30 of them in solitary confinement on death row. International protests and actions demanding the immediate release of Mumia are ever more urgent. Mumia's health is deteriorating and every minute in prison is a slow death sentence. Among other health conditions such as a near deadly diabetic shock and a mistreated painful and debilitating skin condition, he also contracted Hepatitis C while in prison. Due to prolonged refusal to provide access to treatment his condition left him with cirrhosis of the liver. Only after sustained international protest and a judge's order was Mumia finally given appropriate treatment for Hepatitis C. On top of this health crisis,

the water at SCI Mahanoy, where Mumia is serving a life sentence without parole, is contaminated, undrinkable and even unfit for bathing.

Now Mumia has a new legal challenge in the Pennsylvania courts on the grounds that PA Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille had a conflict of interest when he denied Mumia's appeals from 1998-2014. Castille refused to disqualify himself when Mumia's case came before the court despite having been the Philadelphia District Attorney during Mumia's prior appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled such conduct unconstitutional.

On April 30 a court hearing will take place regarding new testimony in reference to Castille. In light of these new legal challenges, a new campaign has begun demanding the public release of all the District Attorney and police files relevant to Mumia's case, as the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas is reviewing the involvement of Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille's conflict of interest in regards to Mumia's case. Also an international call to action was made for the recent March 27 status hearing, and now for the upcoming April 30 court hearing.

Fire This Time echos the demands to release all DA and police files on Mumia Abu-Jamal to the public. Furthermore, Fire This Time demands the immediate release of Mumia. Free Mumia Now! For more information on Mumia's case please visit: <http://www.freemumia.com>





**free.**  
**mumia**  
**firethistime.net**





March 10, 2018 March against the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion in Burnaby, BC, Canada. Indigenous chiefs and elders lead the march.

# Kinder Morgan We Still Say No! People and Planet before Pipeline and Profit! TD Bank – Totally Divest from Kinder Morgan!

*By Thomas Davies*

If Justin Trudeau and Texas oil-giant Kinder Morgan had hoped the movement opposing their plans to build another Tar Sands pipeline between BC and Alberta – March proved that this couldn't be father from the truth. It was also the month the government of Canada was finally forced to admit that it won't meet its United Nations emissions targets in 2020, and likely won't make its 2030 ones either. So it's understandable that people are furious and mobilized, especially with a government failing at its promise to respect indigenous rights, grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time.

The epicentre of the fight has been the City of Burnaby, where Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline from Edmonton terminates. They have a large tank farm and marine loading facility on the side of Burnaby Mountain. One of the most populated areas in Canada – the pipeline would literally run through

people's backyards and underneath a university campus, putting tens of thousands of lives at risk.

Led by indigenous nations who have not given consent for the pipeline to cross

The massive rally also included the construction of a traditional Coast Salish "Watch House" on the path of the proposed pipeline. This house will be continually occupied and serve as a base of actions to stop the pipeline.



Marching in the streets of Burnaby to TD bank, March 24, 2018.

The campaign also stepped up as Kinder Morgan filed a court injunction for a 50 metre "no go" zone around its facilities, citing the constant blockades of construction vehicles by pipeline opponents. A judge pushed that back to 5 meters, but people have continued to defy the "no go" zone with approximately 200 arrested so far at the gates of Kinder

their territory – the resistance has been heating up as Kinder Morgan tries to move forward with construction to triple the capacity of its loading facilities and cut down trees on Burnaby Mountain

10,000 people showed up and marched together to Kinder Morgan's gates on March 10 – showing yet again that after years of opposition people are still passionate about stopping the pipeline.

Morgan's tank farm.

**TD Bank – Totally Divest from Kinder Morgan!**

On March 24 the Climate Coalition organized the "TD Bank Blitz" in Burnaby – with activists holding actions and delivering protest letters to all seven of TD Bank's locations in Burnaby. The letters demanded the bank divest the \$731 million which it has invested in



People of all ages gathered together in front of TD Bank Metrotown, March 24, 2018.

the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion project. This call to action was also joined by organizers in Sechelt and Cowichan, who held similar actions in front of the TD banks in their communities that day as well.

The day started off with a standoff at the first TD Bank, as extra security was brought in to block organizers from delivering a letter to the manager. After promising a TD bank representative would come to receive the letter outside, the security later said that this would actually not be happening. Climate Convergence organizers entered the bank regardless to deliver the letter and announce the reasons for the protest while security pushed, grabbed and shoved them. This was caught by news cameras and TD's hostile approach to receiving a simple letter outlining environmental concerns was broadcast for all of British Columbia to see.

Teams then split up into two groups to deliver letters to other locations. One team was able to slip by security and deliver their letters before setting up a public action outside. The other team was literally followed from bank to bank by a security officer who would block their access to the bank but bring a manager to receive the letter. The day was a big success, with public actions and letters delivered to all seven banks.

Both Cowichan and Sechelt reported great turnouts of over 30 people each which were well reflected in local news

and pushed the number of banks targeted to nine in one day.

### Spring Into Action

Justin Trudeau had now decided to make a fundraising visit to Vancouver and like with every single other visit he has made to the city since his pipeline approval was announced – will be met with a large group of protestors. This action could be the largest yet. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs has also announced that he will be leading a mass action to Kinder Morgan's gates on April 7 with will likely lead to more arrests.

These continuing public mass actions are vital to keep the momentum up to fight the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Kinder Morgan loses millions of dollars every month construction is delayed, and the situation will only escalate if they try to begin construction outside of their already existing facilities. This is a decisive fight against dirty Tar Sands oil and the corporations trying to force through these projects regardless of the human and ecological consequences. We need to keep up the fight and we will win!

Kinder Morgan We Still Say No!

People and Planet before Pipeline and Profit!

TD Bank – Totally Divest from Kinder Morgan!

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

## OUR HERITAGE



### Ahed Tamimi

*Born January 31, 2001, 17-year-old Ahed is a Palestinian hero and anti-occupation activist. She is currently imprisoned in Israel for slapping and kicking an Israeli soldier who shot her cousin in the head with a rubber bullet putting him in a coma.*

"My name is Ahed Tamimi. I am from the village of Nabi Saleh. I am 16 years old. My favourite subject at school is physical education. If there was no occupation I would be a soccer player.

You know, we can see the ocean from here. It's only 30 minutes away but it's forbidden for us to go there. Unless we get Israel's permission.

Every village in this area has a [Jewish-only] settlement around it, or a military base of some physical presence of occupation.

I can't think far into the future because the occupation prevents it. When I used to go play in the street, the army would enter the village and start shooting.

There are settlers down there are trying to take our water spring. We decided to lead a peaceful demonstration.

We are not only active in through demonstration, We also resist through media. Right now injustice is happening all across the world. I wanted to come to America to tell the whole world that we are not afraid of Trump or anyone else.

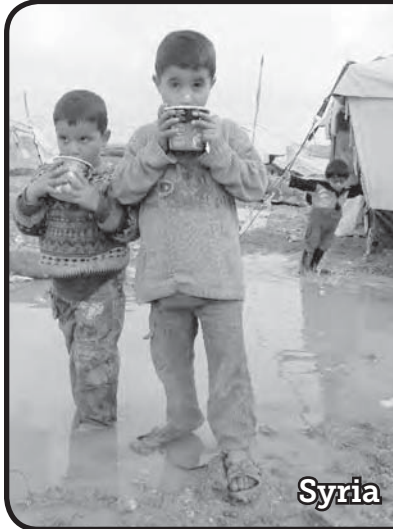
We should extend our struggles to one another in order to end all the world's injustices. We are all victims of some kind of occupation. We, as Palestinians, won't let anyone suffer alone. I encourage those [who are oppressed] to continue their resistance. The voice of justice needs to be heard."

*Video interview as part of the Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA) Living Resistance Tour*



# CHILDREN UNDER WAR & OCCUPATION

## IMPERIALISTS CRY CROCODILE TEARS FOR SYRIA'S CHILDREN



**Syria**



**Afghanistan**



**Yemen**

By Nita Palmer

As Syrian government forces and their allies began last month to make strides towards recapturing the Damascus suburb of East Ghouta from terrorist hands, Western governments, media, and aid agencies have started to cry out: but what about the children? They point the finger squarely at Syrian and Russian forces for killing innocent children.

"How much cruelty will it take before the international community can speak with one voice to say enough dead children, enough wrecked families, enough violence, and take resolute, concerted action to bring this monstrous campaign of annihilation to an end?" UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein asked. There have undoubtedly been child casualties in the pitched battles between Syrian government forces and their allies and the so-called 'rebel' terrorist groups. But the child victims of this war are far more than just the children killed in one battle, or in bombing by the Syrian government of terrorist-controlled areas. The war - as a whole - has in many ways destroyed the lives of an entire generation of Syrian children and youth. Al-Hussein's question in fact must be directed towards the United States and others who supported the terrorist groups which tore the country apart in the first place.

### **Syrian Children: The Lost Generation**

*"In this war I lost five cousins, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, my uncle... and most*

*important of all - we lost our country."* - Ibrahim, child from Damascus (BBC interview)

The Lancet Medical Journal reports that 13,800 Syrian children were killed between 2011-2016, and many more injured. Currently, 8.6 million Syrian children are in desperate need of assistance according to UNICEF. Six million of these children are refugees, displaced from their homes - and often separated from their families or orphaned by the war.

But the threats Syrian children face are not merely physical - the war has taken a harsh mental toll on the young generation as well. With the war entering its eighth year, three million Syrian kids have never known a life without the constant anxiety of war. Two thirds of Syrian children have lost a loved one in the war and many have lost parents, siblings, or friends right before their eyes. The result is as many as 70% of Syrian children experiencing "toxic stress", according to a report by Save the Children. Many children have become withdrawn, aggressive, or simply lost the ability to speak entirely.

In an interview with Deutsche Welle, an 11 year old boy describes the effects of toxic stress well: "I am constantly tired; I always think of certain pictures and they scare me a lot. That is why I cannot concentrate at school. Then I am afraid that something will happen to my parents. Then everything hurts, and I cannot eat anything."

The war has also torn apart families as people are killed and displaced. Stress has been a major factor in skyrocketing divorce rates and increasing reports of domestic violence and conflict, which deeply affects children as well. An increasing number of families are single-parent households (usually single mothers) as one parent is killed, or, as is often the case in refugee families, one parent makes the often-treacherous journey to Europe to secure a new life for their family there.

Syria's education system - once one of the best in the region - has also taken a huge blow, with schools destroyed or sometimes taken over by terrorist groups. Displacement and a lack of security has also taken many children away from their studies. Nearly three million Syrian children are now out of school. The International Rescue Committee released a report last year which found that nearly half of seventh-graders could not read at a grade two level, and 46% of eighth graders could not complete a second-grade math problem.

In areas under control of Daesh (ISIS), schools have been turned into recruitment and training camps. Parents report being forced to send their children to ISIS-run schools, where they learn to count with bullet shells and are educated in types of weapons, along with the group's extremist ideology.

Many children have also been forced to give up their education to work to feed their families - and for many young boys, "work"

means fighting for terrorist organizations. Both ISIS and other terrorist organizations such as the al-Qaeda linked Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham (formerly al Nusra Front) and related groups have been reported paying boys as young as thirteen to fight for them.

The war has been catastrophic for Syrian children, tearing apart their lives, their families, and their future. Aid agencies warn that Syrian children are rapidly on their way to becoming a 'lost generation' - an entire generation of a country without adequate education or family support and traumatized by war. So where has been the outcry from imperialist countries and their media for the past seven years? Where is the outcry when children are killed by terrorist groups? And who bears the responsibility for this tragedy in the first place?

### Who is Responsible for This Tragedy?

The conflict in Syria is not a 'civil war' but an imperialist military intervention. From the very beginning, the US government and their allies trained, armed, and funded so-called 'rebel' groups to create chaos in the country and fight against the Syrian government with the goal of overthrowing President Bashar al Assad. The Pentagon ran a \$500 million program to this end; the Canadian government has contributed \$5.3 million to these groups. But many of these 'moderate rebel' groups have links to al-Qaeda and related organizations and shared the group's extremist ideology. Furthermore, the resulting destabilization fractured the country and allowed for the rise of Daesh.

The Syrian army is not fighting grassroots 'rebels' or 'freedom fighters' but foreign-backed terrorists. Over the course of the war, these groups came to occupy large areas of Syria, including major cities. A 2016 Amnesty International report titled "Torture Was My Punishment" detailed some of the crimes of these terrorists, which included public executions, torture, and wholesale massacres. Some of the groups have also imposed an extreme interpretation of Islamic law in the areas they have captured, punishing anyone who does not comply with their law.

It is not the Syrian government, but these terrorists and their foreign backers who have torn Syria apart. Western media and leaders cry for the children of Syria, but if it were not for their funding these terrorists and tearing the country apart, Syrian children would still be going to school, playing in the streets, living in their homes, and

experiencing what childhood was meant to be instead of a life of fear, scarcity, uncertainty and terror.

### Children: A Cynical Propaganda Tool

While the lives of Syrian children appear to matter to Western leaders, it seems it is only the lives of certain children which matter - that is, the ones which are politically convenient. Imperialists lament the lives of children in East Ghouta, yet remain silent on the crimes of the terrorists - including the killing of civilians in adjacent government-held neighbourhoods.



Amnesty International's report details routine kidnapping of children and teens by some armed groups. Some of these children were never seen by their families again.

Children have also been specifically targeted in mass killings by these groups, such as the 80 children who were killed on an aid convoy which was evacuating them from terrorist-controlled area last year. A suicide bomber approached the convoy offering chips and children's cookies - a deliberate attempt to target children and their families. Yet the deaths of 126 innocent people - 80 of them children - scarcely a word of condemnation came from governments or media in the US, UK, Canada, or elsewhere.

Yet again we see imperialists crying crocodile tears over the children in East Ghouta - while they have ignored the suffering of millions of Syrian kids at the hands of a war they created, they now use children to cry foul as Syrian forces and their allies inch closer to defeating the terrorists.

### Do Iraqi Children's Lives Matter?

Since 2001 and the beginning of the 'war on terror', the world has watched as a new era of war and occupation has begun - and children have been some of its primary victims.

In Iraq, nearly three decades of war and sanctions is taking a harsh toll on children. Five million are in need of humanitarian aid and one in four live in poverty, according to a 2017 UNICEF report. There are nearly 800,000 orphaned children in Iraq, many of whom lost their families directly or indirectly due to the war. The US-led war on Iraq has torn apart the lives and the futures of these children.

Perhaps one of the most grotesque legacies of the war on Iraq, though, is the impact of bombing with heavy-metal containing munitions and chemical agents such as white phosphorus. Iranian toxicologist Mozghan Savabieasfahani reports, "We could see that when the bombing started so did the birth defects. In May 2010, 15% of 547 babies born at the Basra hospital had severe birth defects. This is in contrast to 2% to 4% that is normal."

Depleted uranium, mercury, lead, and other toxic metals have led to high rates of miscarriages, premature births, and childhood leukaemia, along with often horrific birth defects in children.

There are truly no words to describe the suffering and horror these children face - all at the hands of the US, UK, and allies such as Canada.

### What About Afghan Children?

Despite promises of progress from the US-NATO coalition, Afghan children are no further ahead after nearly seventeen years of war. From birth, children face an uphill battle with 35% of babies born underweight. Lack of adequate sanitation or running water and poor nutrition contribute to one of the highest under-5 mortality rates in the world, with more than a quarter of children dying before their fifth birthday, according to the World Health Organization.

Those who are lucky enough to reach their fifth birthday are often robbed of their childhood: around 20% of Afghan children must work to feed their families, often in dangerous, heavy-labour jobs. Some young boys and girls are forced into prostitution to put bread on the table. Few are fortunate enough to receive an education: just 60% Afghan kids are in school - and even out of those, many are not able to attend due



to security concerns and other war related reasons.

The situation for Afghan children was bad enough before the war; after nearly seventeen years of suffering, little has improved, and many more children have been displaced from their homes, orphaned, or maimed in the war. **What About Yemeni Kids?**

And what of the great tragedy facing Yemeni children, which the UN calls “the world’s worst man-made humanitarian crisis”? Since the Saudi intervention and bombing campaign began three years ago, children have paid a terrible price. 400,000 children are malnourished, many quite severely. Saudi Arabia has blocked aid shipments from humanitarian organizations meant to alleviate the suffering of these children.

Air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition have repeatedly been aimed at civilian targets such as homes, schools, and hospitals, leaving over 5000 children dead or injured in their wake. These air strikes have come with full logistical and tactical support from the US.

### **Save the Children: End the Wars!**

Do the lives of Iraqi, Afghan, or Yemeni children matter less than the lives of children in East Ghouta? Or are we truly expected to believe that after more than a decade and a half of wars and occupations - with the blood over hundreds of thousands of dead children on their hands - that the imperialists have found it in their hearts to care for children in Syria? Of course, they do not. Children are not viewed as human beings, as precious gifts by these cold-hearted killers, but as political tools, whose lives can be used to justify their actions.

Hundreds of millions of children around the world suffer under the noose of imperialism, which allows a few countries to gain wealth off the land and resources of most of the world, whose resources they exploit.

The suffering is exacerbated when these imperialist countries go to war to fight for control over that same land and those resources. Children time and again pay the heaviest price for these wars, often being the most vulnerable to the scarcity of food, destruction of family, and ongoing trauma and fear which comes with war.

There is only one way to save the children of Syria and the children of the world: for imperialist countries to end their wars, occupations, and interventions and for oppressed nations to be able to exercise their self-determination. In this way we could begin building a better and more peaceful world for everyone, and a brighter future for our children.

*Follow Nita on Twitter: @NGP1z0*

## *Vancouver joins cities around the world marking 3 years of U.S.-backed Saudi-led war on Yemen*



*By Janine Solanki*

March 26, 2018 marked three years that the people of Yemen have been under a brutal bombing campaign and war, led by Saudi Arabia and with the support of the United States. Saudi fighter jets have indiscriminately bombed vital civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, universities, mosques, refugee camps, funeral and wedding halls, markets, sanitation facilities, cultural centers and even historical sites. This has caused the deaths of more than 15,000 people and injured tens of thousands more. Alongside this inhumane bombardment, Saudi Arabia also has Yemen under a land, air and sea blockade, which severely limits Yemen’s ability to get desperately needed humanitarian aid. According to the United Nations, a record 22.2 million people (80% of the population) need humanitarian assistance, including 8.4 million people that are threatened by severe hunger. Three years of this devastation, where food, medicine and proper health facilities are scarce, have resulted in Yemen facing the worst cholera outbreak on record with over 1 million recorded cases as per the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, an outbreak of diphtheria is on the rise.

The U.S. and Canada continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia and their coalition. The National Post reported that in 2016 “Saudi Arabia was the largest non-U.S. importer of Canadian-made military goods.” The government of Canada also has a \$15 billion arm deal to supply Saudi Arabia with “light” armored military vehicles, which come equipped with heavy guns and a cannon.

While March 26 marked three years of war on Yemen, it was also marked with an international day of action, demanding an end to the Saudi-led war. Tens of thousands of people came out to the streets of Sana’a, Yemen to protest the war against them, despite the threat of Saudi airstrikes. Events and actions took place in other cities around the world, including in London, Paris, Boston, New York and Glasgow as well as

in Ottawa and here in Vancouver, Canada.

In Vancouver, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized a public forum as part of this international day of action against the Saudi-led, U.S.-backed war on Yemen. The event, held at the Vancouver Public Library in downtown Vancouver, started out with video clips that gave participants an overview of the last three years of Saudi bombings and war on Yemen, and the devastation caused to the people of Yemen. A video clip also showed the speech of Human Rights Defender Faris al Najim at the Ottawa protest against the Saudi war on Yemen, organized by the Yemeni community, in front of the house of the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The MC of the event, MAWO chair Alison Bodine, then introduced the first speaker who was Shakir al Abeidi, a Yemeni-Canadian social justice activist, who gave an update on the current situation the people of Yemen are facing after three years of war and blockade. MAWO executive committee member and Tunisian social justice activist Azza Rojbi then spoke, giving an overview of the last three years and the support that the U.S. and Canada has given Saudi Arabia in this brutal war. The last speaker was Ali Yerevani, political editor of Fire This Time Newspaper, who was a participant in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Ali spoke on the war on Yemen within the greater context of the new era of war and occupation. This new era has seen now over 17 years of wars and occupations throughout the Middle East and North Africa, as part of the U.S. strategy to gain hegemony over the region.

Following the speakers, participants took part in a discussion on the war on Yemen and the important role that the antiwar movement has to organize against it. The event closed with MAWO’s commitment to continue organizing, alongside the Yemeni community and the international network of individuals and organizations against the Saudi war on Yemen. For upcoming events and actions, visit [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) or follow on Facebook or Twitter @MAWOVan.

# Open Letter by Intellectuals & Organizations in Support of Mediation in Venezuela, Not Sanctions

We urge the United States and Canadian governments to immediately remove their illegal\* sanctions against Venezuela and to support efforts at mediation between the government of Venezuela and the nonviolent segments of the political opposition.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals in the US and Canada, support hemispheric relations based on respect for the sovereignty of all peoples of the Americas. We are deeply concerned by the use of illegal sanctions, whose effect falls most heavily on the poorest and most marginal sectors of society, to coerce political and economic change in a sister democracy.

Polls in Venezuela show that the large majority of Venezuelans oppose sanctions, regardless of their opinion of the Maduro government. Sanctions merely complicate efforts by the Vatican, Dominican Republic, and other international actors to mediate a resolution to the deep polarization in Venezuela. Moreover, sanctions undermine efforts of the democratically elected government and Constituent Assembly to address critical economic issues and determine their own political destiny.

Despite the high-minded rhetoric of officials in Washington and Ottawa, it is not a genuine concern for democracy, human rights, and social justice that drives the belligerent interventionist posture towards Caracas. From President Obama's admittedly untrue presidential decree that Venezuela represents a national security threat to the United States, to UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's declaration that Venezuela is "an increasingly violent narco-state" that threatens the world, the use of hyperbole in diplomatic situations seldom contributes to peaceful solutions on the world stage.

It is no secret that Venezuela, unlike Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia, is targeted for regime change by the US precisely because of Venezuela's leadership in resisting US hegemony and the imposition of the neoliberal model in Latin America. And of course, Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, attracting more unwanted attention from Washington.

The US and Canada tried and failed to

use the Organization of American States (OAS) to build a bloc to hypocritically evoke the Democratic Charter against Venezuela. Recently, Luis Almagro, the rogue Secretary General of the OAS, went so far as to publicly support the swearing in of a parallel Supreme Court unconstitutionally appointed by opposition legislators and allowed them to use the OAS headquarters in Washington DC for their ceremony – without the approval of any OAS member state. Almagro has thereby delegitimized the OAS, emboldened the most extreme and violent elements of the Venezuelan opposition, and side-lined efforts at mediation.

The US-Canadian sanctions represent a cynical use of coercive economic power to attack a nation that is already dealing with hyperinflation and shortages of basic commodities. While said to be in the name of advancing democracy and freedom, the sanctions violate the Venezuelan peoples' basic human right to sovereignty, as outlined in the UN and OAS Charters.

We call on the political leaders of the United States and Canada to reject overheated rhetoric and to contribute to the search for real solutions to Venezuela's political and economic problems. We urge the US and Canadian governments to rescind their sanctions and support the mediation efforts pursued by the Chancellor of the Dominican Republic Miguel Vargas, the President of Dominican Republic Danilo Medina, former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the Vatican, and supported by a growing number of Latin American nations.

*\* Chapter 4 Article 19 of the OAS Charter states: No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements.*



Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro with American actor, Danny Glover, March 2018.

Letter sign by over 100 individuals and organizations including:

- ✓ Noam Chomsky, Author, Professor, and Activist
- ✓ Danny Glover, Citizen-Artist
- ✓ Estela Vazquez, Executive Vice President, 1199 SEIU
- ✓ Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Archdiocese of Detroit
- ✓ Jill Stein, Green Party USA
- ✓ Jerry Dias, President, UNIFOR
- ✓ Mike Palecek, National President, Canadian Union of Postal Workers
- ✓ Harvey Bischof, President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- ✓ Mark Hancock National President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees

As well as Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice Venezuela Solidarity Campaign – Vancouver

For the full list of signatories visit:  
<https://afgj.org/endsanctions>



# FIRE THIS TIME IN VENEZUELA!



Introducing Fire This Time Newspaper to Jorge Arreaza, Venezuela's Foreign Minister



Delcy Rodriguez, President of Venezuela's Constituent Assembly wearing a Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign button! Seated w/ Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza.



Photo with Erika Farías Peña, Mayor of Caracas

**Three Fire This Time Editorial Board Members Participated at #TodosSomosVenezuela !!!**

**Viva Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolutionary Process!**

**Let's Build a Strong World-Wide Solidarity Movement with Venezuela!**

*By Tamara Hansen*

*Alison Bodine*

*& Azza Rojbi*

From March 5-7, 2018 Venezuela hosted the #TodosSomosVenezuela (We are all Venezuela) international solidarity conference. #TodosSomosVenezuela was an important success, with over 300 international participants from 95 countries in North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. For everyone that participated, the conference was educational, dynamic, and inspiring. Held during a critical time for the Bolivarian Revolutionary process in Venezuela, #TodosSomosVenezuela was also necessary.

In the weeks leading up to #TodosSomosVenezuela, Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary process were under increasing attack from the U.S. government and their allies. Rex Tillerson, the former U.S. Secretary of State, had just completed a tour of five right-wing Latin American countries attempting to drum up support for further U.S. intervention in Venezuela. He even

went as far as to insinuate that the Venezuelan military should overthrow the democratically elected government.

These attacks have been ongoing since the Bolivarian Revolution process began with the election of Hugo Chavez in 1998. Increasing over the last few years, the governments of the U.S., Canada, and the European Union have introduced criminal sanctions and fueled an economic war against the people of Venezuela. These governments have also made constant threats to Venezuela's sovereignty and self-determination, including funding and support to Venezuela's violent, counter-revolutionary opposition.

For almost 20 years the people of Venezuela and the revolutionary government, first of Comandante Hugo Chavez, and now of President Nicolas Maduro, have stood strong against imperialist intervention. They have continued to build the Bolivarian Revolutionary process in favour of poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela.

Throughout the Bolivarian Revolutionary process, Venezuela has not been alone. Together with Cuba, they have fought to build a new balance of power in Latin America and the Caribbean, one that stands for independence and self-determination against the hegemony of the United States and their imperialist allies.

With an understanding of the urgent necessity to build a stronger and more united Venezuela solidarity movement, the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice - Venezuela Solidarity Campaign sent three delegates to #TodosSomosVenezuela. Tamara Hansen, Alison Bodine and Azza Rojbi, all members of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board





Top to Bottom: Alison, Tamara and Azza give interviews for various Venezuelan TV channels; Alison and Tamara at an eternal flame for Comandante Chavez; Azza (and American activist Dakota Lilly) meet with Venezuelan LG-BTQ+ activists; Tamara talks with the Cuban delegation.

joined the conference, alongside more than 300 international delegates and 500 delegates from the newly elected National Constituent Assembly, social movements and community organizations within Venezuela. Over three days, they participated in workshops, discussions and cultural events at the Teresa Carreño Theater in Caracas, at important sites within Caracas and in the adjacent state of Vargas.

Beyond the informative and dynamic program, there was also the important opportunity for Venezuela solidarity activists to get to exchange with one another about our solidarity work for Venezuela. Whether in between scheduled events, or over the dinner table, there were countless discussions and exchanges between delegates, focused on sharing our experiences in building Venezuela solidarity and planning for future coordination and collaboration. Rarely is there the opportunity for such a diverse group of solidarity activists to get to know one another, making these discussions, whether held in Spanish, English, French or Arabic, or many other languages, some of the most important work of the conference.

In addition to spaces for workshops or speeches, the main square of the theater complex was transformed into a TV and radio studio for Venezuela's revolutionary media, including VTV Channel 8, TeleSUR and the Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information. The Fire This Time delegation was invited to give several interviews, for links to some of the interviews see the end of this article.

The workshops of #TodosSomosVenezuela covered a broad section of society and of the gains and challenges of the Bolivarian revolutionary process. There were sessions of women, trade unionists, and youth in Venezuela which highlighted the important role of these sectors of Venezuelan society within the revolution. From the speakers and the discussions, it was especially apparent that women and youth are the motor force of the revolution – the people that are driving it forward and taking a leading role, not only in the streets, but in their schools, workplaces, community groups, and neighborhoods.

The energy under the large tents where the workshops were held was tangible. Typically, the presentations of the speakers would end with supportive chants, or even songs from the audience, proceeding a lively discussion. One song that could be heard was:

*Chávez no se murió* (Chávez did not die)

*Chávez no se murió* (Chávez did not die)  
*Chávez se hizo millones, se hizo millones*  
 (Chávez became millions, became millions)  
*¡Chávez soy yo!* (Chávez is me!)

There were also educational sessions such as those on health, on the challenges and advancements of the National Constituent Assembly, and on the sanctions against Venezuela and the impact of the Economic War imposed by right-wing Venezuelan opposition and the U.S. government. These workshops armed participants to fight against the media war against Venezuela, in which capitalist mass media has consistently echoed the lies and rhetoric of the U.S. government and their allies, reporting on Venezuela as a “failed state” and “facing humanitarian crisis.” Not only did speakers representing the revolutionary government refute these deceptions, Venezuelan grassroots activists participating in the conference also shared about the reality of the Bolivarian revolution in contrast to the manipulations of mainstream media.

Participants in #TodosSomosVenezuela were also honoured with the contributions of many leaders from the Bolivarian Revolutionary government, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the National Constituent Assembly to the conference.

Delcy Rodríguez, the President of the National Constituent Assembly and the Secretary General of the Somos Venezuela Social Movement, and Jorge Arreaza, the Foreign Minister of Venezuela both gave speeches appealing to everyone at the conference to work in all spheres of society to build solidarity with the Venezuela. They also gave the participants one of their important tasks upon returning from Venezuela, as Jorge Arreaza said, “The delegations here present are jointly responsible for spreading the truth







Alison and Azza also met Jesus "Chuy" Perez, another young member of Venezuela's Constituent Assembly

of women from all walks of life in Venezuela gathered inside the Miraflores Presidential Palace. There, Blanca Eekhout, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality spoke alongside President Nicolas Maduro about the gains made by women in Venezuela under the Bolivarian revolutionary process. Some of the international guests, including Azza Rojbi from the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign were also honoured to be recognized from the stage for their participation by President Nicolas Maduro.

about Venezuela. To break the media siege there are various mechanisms that can be innovated."

#TodosSomosVenezuela closed with a rousing speech by the President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, who spoke of the legacy of Comandante Chávez, the achievements of the Bolivarian revolutionary process within the world of capitalism and imperialist attack, as well as the importance of building a stronger solidarity movement. President Maduro finished his speech by emphasizing the importance of building a strong network of solidarity, "We want to continue solidifying, improving these networks of solidarity, which provide mutual support. We must build a powerful communication network. We must build a powerful network to communicate, of those that know our truth and will stand with us; a powerful communication network to break the domination, lies and manipulations of the dominant network in each of our countries."

It is also important to note that the #TodosSomosVenezuela Conference opened in Caracas, Venezuela on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of Comandante Hugo Chávez. As President Nicolas Maduro said at the closing ceremony:

"For us Chávez is a commitment. For us Chávez is the ultimate expression of loyalty. In in the face of all tests, Chávez never made any excuse in order to violate a fundamental principle of loyalty to the revolution, to the people, to the principles of truth...For us Chávez is the capacity for creation, the audacity, the capacity for experimentation. For us Chávez is a reflection of the fact that socialism is the path of humanity, and the only way that will guarantee the permanence of the human species on this planet."

The majority of the participants in #TodosSomosVenezuela left the day following the conference closing, but some were able to stay and participate in the actions marking March 8 International Women's Day. In order to mark this important occasion, thousands

With the great success of the #TodosSomosVenezuela conference, the revolutionary government of Venezuela achieved their goals in promoting the advances of the Bolivarian revolutionary process, and in bringing together a broad representation of solidarity activists from around the world.

For those of us that participated, it is clear from our experiences that Venezuela does not need us to tell them what to do at this critical moment in their history. What they need us to do is to build a stronger solidarity movement to get the boot of the imperialists off their necks. We must join together to fight against imperialist sanctions, threats, and intervention in Venezuela.

It is our responsibility to show the U.S. government and their allies that we as poor, working and oppressed people around the world will defend Venezuela's right to sovereignty, independence and self-determination. To show them that indeed, #TodosSomosVenezuela (We are all Venezuela).

#### Selection of Fire This Time Delegation Interview Links:

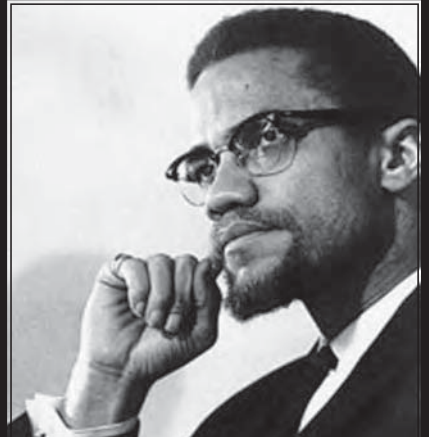
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDObE6lCLD8>
- <https://www.facebook.com/VTVtUCanal/videos/1775528805830855/>
- <http://www.vicpresidencia.gob.ve/index.php/2018/03/07/el-mundo-expreso-su-solidaridad-con-venezuela/>
- <http://mppre.gob.ve/2018/03/07/representantes-de-distintos-movimientos-sociales-expresan-su-apoyo-al-pueblo-y-gobierno-venezolano/>

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza\_R14

## "By Any Means Necessary..."



### MALCOLM X SPEAKS

"You're not doing the Black man any favor. If you stick a knife in my back, if you put it in nine inches and pull it out six inches, you haven't done me any favor. If you pull it all the way out, you haven't done me any favor. And this is what you have to realize. If you put a man in jail against his will—illegally, he's not guilty—you frame him up, and then because he resents what you've done to him, you put him in solitary confinement to break his spirit, then after his spirit is broken, you let him out a little bit and give him the general run of the prison, you haven't done him any favor. If you let him out of prison completely, you haven't done him any favor, because you put him in there unjustly and illegally in the first place."

- from Malcolm X Speech  
"Twenty Million Black People in a Political, Economic and Mental Prison"  
January 23, 1963

# FIRE THIS TIME INTERVIEWS

## Members of Venezuela's Constituent Assembly!



Tamara interviews Rafael Argotty of  
the Constituent Assembly



Alison interviews Basew Asfur of  
the Constituent Assembly

By Tamara Hansen  
Alison Bodine  
& Azza Rojbi

*While in Caracas, Venezuela participating in the #TodosSomosVenezuela 2018 international solidarity conference, Fire This Time sat down with two of the 537 newly elected members of Venezuela's National Constituent Assembly, which is now tasked with improving and broadening the Venezuela Constitution and strengthening the Bolivarian revolutionary process. We discussed the necessity of the National Constituent Assembly, the #TodosSomosVenezuela conference and the importance of international solidarity with the Bolivarian revolutionary process. Below are some excerpts from the interviews.*

**Rafael Argotty – Representative of Pensioners, Capital Region**

**FTT:** Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Please introduce yourself and let us know why you chose to run to be a member of the National Constituent Assembly.

**Rafael Argotty:** I'm Rafael Argotty. I am a civil engineer in hydraulics, I am vice president of the commission of older adults and seniors at the National Constituent Assembly.

Participating in the National Constituent Assembly is my duty as a Venezuelan, to confront the situation of violence that started in 2017 in our country. It was a violence we had never known before. In our country, we Venezuelans are people of peace, we are friendly people. We always resolve our contradictions with a stew, a soup, a beer, a drink.

We have observed that in addition to the

economic siege, there was a media siege and an internal process of sabotage that had created a level of violence that we had never seen in Venezuela. The right-wing violent opposition burned more than 29 Venezuelans alive, for the simple reason that they looked Chavista, for the colour of their skin. It is a level of racism that we had never before experienced in our country. In the end, it was almost four months of daily violence instigated by the right-wing opposition.

This opposition has always qualified the Bolivarian government as a dictatorial government, while Venezuela is a country where we Venezuelans decide. We have had 24 elections in the 18 years of the Bolivarian revolution. There is nothing that our country does without consultation of the people, freely. How can they then qualify the Venezuelan government as a dictatorial government?

This violence did not allow us to exercise the right to work, the right to education, the right to free movement. Much of the violence in the street is created by foreigners hired to come to foment violence in our country.

The National Constituent Assembly was in principle called for peace. That was what President Maduro said, first would be peace, then next would come restoring the rights of youth, the rights of women, of the elderly and pensioners, worker's rights. This National Constituent Assembly not only has the political representation of the 330 municipalities of the country, a political territorial representative for each municipality of the country, it also has 178 delegates from different sectors of the Venezuelan society, women's groups, pensioner and senior's groups, workers organizations, student groups, indigenous groups, peasant

organizations. It is a general representation of the Venezuelan population.

On July 30, 2017 more than 9 million Venezuelans went to the polls to elect the National Constituent

Assembly. Now we have the peace that Venezuelans wanted. Us Venezuelans are good people, we respect the ideas of each other and our differences, but we must resolve our political differences with the vote, elections, not violence.

Now the National Constituent Assembly is going to grow our rights and our duties as Venezuelans. The new constitution will have a chapter for young people, a chapter for people with disabilities, there will be a chapter for pensioners, there will be a chapter for women, because it is a feminist revolution, there will be a chapter for the peasants.

**FTT:** Thank you for your time.

**Basew Asfur – Representative of the Puerto Cabello Municipality, Carabobo State**

**FTT:** Thank you for welcoming us to Venezuela and for the interview. Following this successful conference, it is our job as solidarity activists to do more actions in solidarity with Venezuela and against economic sanctions and threats from the U.S. government and its allies around the world. In your perspective, what is our most important work as people living outside of Venezuela?

**Basew Asfur:** Well, to start off, what is important is your participation in the #TodosSomosVenezuela international solidarity conference and the lifting of your voices in defence of Venezuela as social movements. As our president Nicolás Maduro said, we want the alliance and the support of the peoples of the world, not governments. You are going to take back to your respective countries, the reality of the situation that you

*continued on page 31*



# VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY ACTIVISTS IN VANCOUVER TAKE TO THE STREETS IN DEFENSE OF VENEZUELA!

*By Janine Solanki*

Here in Canada we may hear news about Venezuela on our radios and nightly news programs. However, it is the news we do not hear that is important. The news we do not hear is that in March 2018, the Venezuelan government announced it had completed building two million affordable homes in just seven years, as part of the People's Social Protection System, and plans to build another million homes by December 2019. What we do not hear is that 95.4% of Venezuelans eat three times per day according to the National Institute of Statistics. This is thanks to social programs providing subsidized food, free meals, and free school dinners, which have played a significant role in eradicating hunger and child malnutrition. This is considering that in 1998, when Comandante Hugo Chávez was elected as president of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution began, 21% of the population suffered from undernourishment according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations definition. By 2017, that figure had been reduced to 2%.

In Vancouver, Canada, the Fire This Time (FTT) Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been organizing every month in defense of Venezuela, demanding that the governments of the U.S. and Canada respect the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela. On March 2, the monthly action started out with a picket action in front of the U.S. consulate in downtown Vancouver. Protesters held up picket signs demanding "U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!" and "No Regime Change in Venezuela!" while chanting energetically and marched in front of the U.S. consulate. The protesters

gathered in between rounds of picketing to hear from local speakers, who drew attention to the March 5th anniversary of the passing of Comandante Hugo Chávez. Now five years since his death, the people of Venezuela are still fighting to advance the Bolivarian revolution, despite imperialist attempts to destroy it.

The action then continued at the downtown square of the Vancouver Art Gallery, where an information table and large Venezuelan flag was setup. Passersby stopped by the table to learn more about Venezuela, and activists handed out leaflets to those passing by on the busy street.

## International Day of Action

A few weeks later, March 17 was called as an international day of action in defense of Venezuela, in direct response to a call for pro-foreign intervention demonstrations by Venezuela's U.S.-backed, violent opposition. The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign brought together Venezuela supporters for a banner drop over the busy downtown Vancouver Stanley Park highway. Cars driving under the overpass couldn't miss the giant banner reading "U.S./Canada Hands Off Venezuela!" alongside activists holding picket signs, and the protest received a great response with honks of support from passing cars. The international response to the action was far and wide, with video and photos of the action retweeted around the

world, including by the Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza. Supporters at the protest also got to hear from the experiences of a delegation of FTT organizers who had just returned from Venezuela, where they participated in an international solidarity conference.

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign also participated in two events in solidarity with Venezuela organized by the Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front Southwest Canada Chapter. On March 15 an event in commemoration of the life of Hugo Chavez was held, and the Fire This Time delegation to the solidarity conference in Venezuela was invited to report back from it alongside other participants from Vancouver. Then on March 18 the Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front called for a rally in downtown Vancouver also as part of the international days of action for Venezuela. The Fire This Time editorial board member Alison Bodine, who was also a delegate to the Venezuela solidarity conference, was invited up to speak.

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign will continue being out on the streets every month, protesting in front of the U.S. consulate and demanding U.S./Canada hands off Venezuela! To join in the next event visit [www.firethistime.net](http://www.firethistime.net) or follow on Facebook and Twitter @FTT\_np

*Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki*



# 15 YEARS AFTER THE WAR ON IRAQ

## Mobilization Against War and Occupation demands U.S. Out of Iraq Now!

By Janine Solanki

On March 19th, 2003 the U.S. war on Iraq began, with the infamous “shock and awe” bombing campaign that was the starting point for the next 15 years of brutality and destruction under U.S. occupation. 15 years on, over 1.2 million Iraqis have been killed and every single quality of life indicator, from health to education to employment, have taken a nosedive for the worse. Today, after so many years, the U.S.-led war is still plaguing the people of Iraq. The crisis in Iraq is only deepening, still under the grip of U.S. occupation, and today Iraqis make up a significant amount of the largest refugee crisis the world has ever seen, as the result of imperialist wars and occupations.

On March 16th, 2018, the Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) monthly antiwar rally and petition drive marked 15 years since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, and demanded an end to the continued occupation of Iraq. With an information table, banners and activists holding picket signs reading “U.S. Out of Iraq Now!” people walking by the busy downtown square couldn’t miss that here in Vancouver, peace-loving people are coming together to demand an end to the war on Iraq. Many people stopped by the table to get more information or stopped to talk to activists out collecting signatures on the MAWO



petition demanding that Canada end its military involvement in Iraq.

After collecting petition signatures and handing out information, activists gathered together and heard from speakers, including MAWO executive committee member Janine Solanki, who spoke about the impact that 15 years of brutal war has had on the people of Iraq. Azza Rojbi, also a MAWO executive committee member and a Tunisian social justice activist, also spoke about yet another upcoming date marking yet another war. March 26 marks three years of the Saudi-led, U.S.-backed war and bombing of Yemen. Azza spoke against the

indiscriminate bombing campaign that has led to Yemen facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis and encouraged people to sign on to the MAWO petition demanding Canada end its \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

The rally came to a close with chants of “no to war and occupation, yes to self-determination”, “U.S. out of Iraq now!” and “stop bombing Yemen now!” Every month MAWO is out on the streets, rallying and petitioning to demand an end to imperialist wars and occupations. To find out about MAWO’s next action visit [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) or follow on Facebook or Twitter @MAWOVan

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE IS OUR LIFE

### SPRING ANTIWAR/ANTI-OCCUPATION MOBILIZATIONS

By Alison Bodine

On Friday, March 23 U.S. President Trump signed the bill for a \$700 billion military budget, the largest in U.S. history. These funds will continue to fuel the new era of war and occupation, the deadly war drive of the U.S. government that began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. This path of death and destruction that has been carved throughout the Middle East and North Africa has also been leveled against people at home in the United States. What Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in 1966 during the U.S. war on Vietnam still rings true today “the bombs in Vietnam explode at home.”

As the U.S. government and their allies ramp up their attacks on people both at home and abroad, there will be a coordinated period of action based in the United States known as the “Spring Mobilizations to End the Wars at Home and Abroad.” These important actions are organized by a broad coalition of peace and social justice groups including the Coalition Against U.S.

Foreign Military Bases, the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the Black Alliance for Peace, Veterans for Peace, and the ANSWER Coalition.

As the resolution calling for the days of antiwar actions states, “While the United States ranks first by far in military spending, it ranks 7th in literacy, 20th in education, 25th in infrastructure quality, 37th in quality of health care, 31st in life expectancy, and 56th in infant mortality.” It continues, “since 2001 the United States has used its military force for invading and bombing in numerous countries — Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, eventually costing the American taxpayers \$4 trillion in Afghanistan and Iraq alone — and is now threatening to attack Iran and North Korea.”

Actions are set to take place in New York City, Washington DC, San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Minneapolis and Atlanta, among other cities across the United States, from April 13-21. Vancouver’s peace coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has joined in this



international period of action as well and will be organizing a protest on Friday April 13<sup>th</sup> at the Vancouver Art Gallery at 5pm demanding “Stop the Wars at Home and Abroad! U.S./Canada/ NATO Hands Off: Yemen, North Korea, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Libya, North Africa & the Middle East!”

For more information on the coordinated Spring actions visit: [www.springaction2018.org](http://www.springaction2018.org) or [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org)





# REPEAL BILL C-51! SCRAP BILL C-59! HEY TRUDEAU! RESPECT OUR PRIVACY, HUMAN & DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS!

*By Thomas Davies*

As the recent Cambridge Analytica “data mining” scandal unfolds, many are becoming more aware and more concerned about how much of their personal and private information is being collected without their consent on the internet. While the Trudeau government has spoken out against what happened, it’s completely hypocritical given their current efforts to completely ramp up their own agencies abilities to collect our personal information without justification through their updated national security law Bill C-59. While they had promised they would “fix” the Conservatives hated “Anti-Terrorism Law” Bill C-51, in reality they are trying push through new data collection powers which have human rights and civil liberties organizations speaking out.

In response to the scandal, where data was “harvested” without consent from 50 million Facebook users for the Trump election campaign, Justin Trudeau responded that, “I think we all need to make sure we are using modern tools in a responsible way.” Scott Brison, the acting minister for democratic institutions, also said he would be open to strengthening federal privacy laws even further to better defend those who share their information online.

However, this doesn’t stand right with what Micheal Vonn, Policy Director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and Tim McSorley, National Coordinator of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group summarized in a recent joint article on the Liberals Bill

about undue surveillance, racial and religious profiling, due process and free speech, civil liberties and human rights organizations in Canada have general consensus on the biggest problems with C-59: first, national security agencies will be empowered like never before to conduct mass surveillance; second, it is impossible to effectively challenge your inclusion on the “no-fly list”; and third, the CSE (Canada’s NSA) will be authorized to conduct cyberattacks and we have shockingly little idea of the implications of this.”

They found the Liberal promises that C-59 would include more oversight mechanisms nonsensical, “Bill C-59 also expressly empowers mass surveillance through the collection of bulk data and suspiciously non-defined ‘publicly available’ data. The terrible irony is that this means instead of reining in mass surveillance, the new oversight bodies will be giving an official seal of approval to mass surveillance.”

They summarized, “Canadians were told that the new law would fix the old law. Instead, we got a bill that nominally addresses some concerns, but exploits the opportunity to introduce more radical new powers for national security agencies.” Canada’s Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien agrees, “On issues related to the sharing and retention of personal information, we do not believe Bill C-59 attains the standards of privacy that would adequately protect Canadians.”

The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has been organizing weekly actions to defend our democratic and human rights from these so-called “Anti-Terrorism”

laws for over three years. Trudeau and every single Liberal MP is on record as voting in favour of the Harper Conservatives Bill C-51, and now they are even more on the record as putting forward a law which is in vital ways worse for our privacy and security.

Throughout the month of March the Working Group was busy taking advantage of some improved weather and recent discussion on rights and privacy. Four picket and petition drives were held at the busy transit hubs of Metrotown, Joyce, Stadium-Chinatown and Broadway-City Hall. This brought the number of weekly actions up to 160 straight weeks – one of the longest ongoing protests in his history of the country.

This is an important moment for groups defending human and democratic rights and opposing Bill C-59. The Liberals have been trying to fast-track the Bill through parliament but given the ongoing scandal and public interest in privacy and surveillance – it’s an opportunity to show what they really up to. When the Conservatives first introduced Bill C-51, the responding protest movement was broad and active, but lost momentum after the Conservatives lost the elections and Trudeau promised to “fix” Bill C-51. Now that it’s completely obvious they will “fix” nothing – we need to continue to work to mobilize in the same way to defeat Bill C-59. The Working Group the Stop Bill C-51 will be continuing its weekly campaigns and calls and other groups across Canada to ramp up activity as well.

Repeal Bill C-51!

Scrap Bill C-59!

Justin Trudeau – Respect Our Privacy and Human Rights!

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



continued from page 27

saw here in Venezuela: that here there is no dictatorship, that there is a participatory democracy, that the Venezuelan people continue to defend their revolution. You saw with your own eyes how the economic war is, and you have witnessed how hard they have attacked our economy.

We want you to take what you saw here and the experiences you had here back to your countries. Let your experience in Venezuela be seen and heard, not only by demonstrations in the street, but also using social media. Give speeches about your experiences,

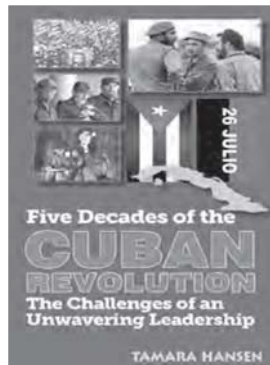
inviting others to come visit Venezuela and see for themselves our Revolution and our participatory democracy. In every aspect that you can collaborate with Venezuela, we welcome you. Know that here in Venezuela you have friends and allies.

We the Venezuelan people thank you for your support. Here in Venezuela you have an ally, a brother. The people of Venezuela will always be in the struggle to support you, you can count on Venezuela as we count on your support. ¡Chávez Vive!

FTT: Thank you for your time.

## Battle of Ideas Press

### 5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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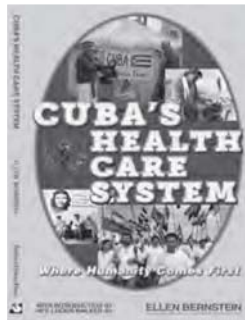
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BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

*"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."*

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003.

She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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por Cuba  
Elecciones generales  
2017-2018



## Elections & Democracy

### in Revolutionary Cuba

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**Juan Carlos Rodriguez Diaz**  
Prof. of History and Member of Cuba's  
National Assembly

**Yamil Martinez Marrero**  
Canada Desk of the Cuban Institute of  
Friendship with the Peoples -ICAP

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# STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD!

PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAYS OF  
ANTIWAR "SPRING ACTION"



**FRIDAY  
APRIL 13**  
**5 PM**  
2018

**U.S./CANADA/  
NATO HANDS OFF:  
YEMEN, NORTH  
KOREA, IRAN, SYRIA,  
IRAQ, VENEZUELA,  
AFGHANISTAN,  
LIBYA, NORTH  
AFRICA & THE  
MIDDLE EAST!**

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HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT! NOT FOR WAR AND OCCUPATION!  
RESIST IMPERIALIST WAR MONGERING! NO TO WAR & OCCUPATION! YES TO SELF-  
DETERMINATION! NO TO WAR & OCCUPATION! NO TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION!  
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR INDIGENOUS NATIONS! SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL  
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**MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION** @MAWQVAN  
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# U.S. + CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!



**FRIDAY APRIL 6 2018**

**1. PROTEST ACTION 4 PM**  
"U.S./CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!"  
US CONSULATE IN VANCOUVER - 1070 WEST PENDER ST.

**2. INFO TABLING + PETITION 5:30 PM**  
"NO MORE U.S./CANADA SANCTIONS + THREATS!  
RESPECT THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!"  
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY - ROBSON ST. @ HOWE ST.

FIRE THIS TIME - VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN  
**WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET**



## MONTHLY PICKET ACTION

**Return  
Guantanamo  
to Cuba Now!**

**End the U.S.  
Blockade on  
Cuba Now!**

**TUESDAY APRIL 17TH - 4 PM**  
**U.S. CONSULATE**  
1075 W. PENDER ST., VANCOUVER, CANADA

@NoBloqueoVan  
FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE-VANCOUVER  
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